

Femme Fatales

OF THE FILMS

Summer 1993

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RHONDA SHEAR
GINGER LYNN ALLEN
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THEY BITE

ANOTHER KIND
OF "JAWS," A
HORROR SPOOF

Screened, back to the
beach cover girl,
Monique Groumich

Volume 2 Number 1



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**RETURN
OF THE LIVING DEAD
PART 3E**

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DEMOLITION MAN**



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Italian horror maestro Dario Argento with a severed head prop from TRAUMA, previewed next issue.

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Hi, folks. I realize *Femme Fatales* #5 may sort of look like "Blinka Stevens Presents," and in a sense that's true, hope you won't mind too much. Fact is, editor Bill George paid another visit to Rick and Monica's. We haven't heard from him since. And associate editor Debbie Rochon mysteriously disappeared, somewhere in Tromsø, after turning in her article. Pray for her.

Though absent from last issue, I've come up with a vengeance (perhaps a little too much) with my new run of *THE SACRED PREY* (#55-61) (mm). Two of my articles involve creative rewrites, both meant to rejection: Brian Schilling and Brian Puccio had each written a screenplay, neither of which was immediately solicited for a movie sale. I then turned her *SACRED PREY* script into an award-winning novel, and Brian's work mutated into *Evil Empire*, a wildly successful comic book. Not surprisingly, producers are clamoring for the film rights to both properties. I suspect it's the dawn of a new age in Hollywood where only the least vulnerable—and most stubborn—will survive.

Other notes: We welcome Rhonda Shear, hostess of USA's UP ALL NIGHT B-movie banquet, to the *FP* staff. Her celebrity interviews will be featured in future issues.

Part II of the Trap Lords interview (FF 1:4) has been postponed until next issue. Ms. Lords' latest genre-related roles—including the ABC miniseries, *THE TOMMYKNOCKERS*, and a *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* episode—required another round of disclosure.

We mourn the passing of Mark Leivdal, whose resplendent photography graced the pages of this magazine. Ava Cedell, one of his close friends, eulogized that "Mark's memory will always be alive with his photos." And we'll rekindle the memory by printing Leivdal's work in future issues.

Back to work on *FF #6*, our most elaborate—and sexiest—issue to date (check out the back cover). But right now, I've got to organize a search party for Bill. And a S.W.A.T. team to find Debbie. See you next time.

Drinks: Slusheys



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 Garfield, Lawrence Greenberg, Bruce G. Halliwell, Rhonda Shear, Editorial Operations/Mani Hane Papp, Editorial Production: Lisa A. Tronick
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LETTERS

ROUND #1 WITH ROBEY

In your interview with Robey (FF 1-4), she calls *PLAY NICE* "a terrific script" that she was "excited about." As the authors of the screenplay, we are flattered. But as associate producers on the film, we find it necessary to set the record straight regarding some of the more outrageous statements she made.

Her assertions that the director, Terri Treas, was "unprepared" and that she "never once sat [Robey] down and told [her] what she was going to be doing" could not be more untrue. We were present for many of the hours that Ms. Treas spent rehearsing with Robey and her leading man, (the ever-patient and always professional Ed O'Ross), explaining the intention of the story and choreographing the love scenes so the actors could be as comfortable as possible. On the set, however, Robey seemed to retain none of the information covered during these sessions. In fact, most days she arrived unprepared and in no condition to work. It was this general lack of professionalism that proved to be the greatest detriment to the filming of this movie. It is no surprise that she has no recollection of Ms. Treas explaining anything to her; she couldn't even remember her lines. Consequently, in some scenes, what was left of her sexual performance was ultimately salvaged by cobbling together bits and pieces in the editing room from her various and quite numerous takes.

As for the producer, Lums Cingolani, being "let down" by Ms. Treas, he is currently in negotiation with her to direct another project, mainly because he considers her the most prepared director he has ever worked with. We echo those sentiments, and would gladly work with her again, anytime.

Michael Zand
& Chuck McCollum
Los Angeles, CA

LESS BUDGET, MORE FILLING

Congratulations on an outstanding periodical. Call them *femmes fatales* or B-Movie



There's trouble in paradise via the *PLAY NICE* conflict, but Robey shows more than promise as a big-screen actress.

stars, they are finally gaining the recognition that they are actresses. For my money, their movies are more entertaining than some of the big-budget "A" films. Beautiful, talented, and oh-so-sexy, they have saved many forgettable films.

It's amazing, but in your first four issues, you have already interviewed many of my favorites and had the insight to keep Brinke Stevens on staff (my number one with a bullet). Please continue your winning ways. So, thank you for filling the void, and not pandering to the lowest common denominator while not bowing to others by putting out the magazine you want.

Paul M. McGuigan
Windsor, PA

DEE-LIGHTFUL

Dee Wallace Stone has definitely had a colorful career. Her work over the years, especially in genre films, was well represented in her profile [14]. Congratulations to Debbie Rochon for the in-depth interview with a very underrated actress.

Mike Tristano
Los Angeles, CA

DRIVE-IN DIVAS

I would like to see Corinne Alphen-Wahl (AMAZON WOMEN ON THE MOON, SCREWBALL HOTEL) profiled. She's the "former" wife of TV's WISGUY, Ken Wahl. Suggests: a "where are they now" section that profiles a B-movie actress from the past,

like Tura Santana or Babette Bardot.

Pete Hendra
Toronto, Ontario

[On occasion, we will update a B-Queen veteran, much like this issue's profile on Cheryl Rainoux Smith. Writer Ari Bazz has consulted everyone from Joe Dante to Mary Woronov to trace the B-Queen who starred in HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD, SUMMER SCHOOL TEACHERS, MAMA'S DIRTY GIRLS, CANDY STRIP NURSES, et al. What ever happened to Candice Rialson? Find out next issue.]

WANTED:

INTERVIEWS WITH... Melissa Moore. She's made a number of horror films, but I just saw her kicking her way through *ANGEL FIST*. And Cynthia Rothrock, the kung fu goddess. Only *Femme Fatales* could get a trustworthy interview.

John B. Shearer
Cleveland, OH

Sarah Douglas, Cynthia Rothrock, Suzanne Owen, Tanya Roberts, Sandahl Bergman, Olivia D'Abo, Tracy Scoggins, Sheridan Fenn...

Aaron Rostante
San Juan Capistrano, CA

Janet Julian (FEAR CITY, KING OF NEW YORK, HUMONGOUS, GHOST WAR-RIOR, et al.) Also, Chen Caifeng, star of the GINGER film series.

David Kiser
Hickory, NC

Erim Gray (TV's BUCK ROGERS), Karen Kopins (ONCE BITTEN), Rosalind Allen (CHILDREN OF THE CORN II).

Van Harenstorian
Monterey, CA

Henther Thomas (ZAPPED, CYCLONE, RED BLOODED AMERICAN GIRL).

S. Forbes
Surrey, England

FEMME FATALE FAN CLUBS:

Debbie Rochon. Yep, our own editrix is responding to readers' request with her newsletter, photos, et al. Introduced on FF 1.1's "Fatal Attractions" page, Rochon has subsequently graduated to our Associate Editor (she'll also be posing for a Betty Page homage in our next issue). Send a s.a.s.e. to: 714 Ninth Avenue, Suite 380, New York City, New York—10019.

Rhonda Shear. The late-night lambchop is offering easy collectibles that range from T-shirts to full-color boudoir photos. \$18.50 buys your introduction to Rhonda's fan club, along with a full-color, 8x10 "peek-a-hoo lace" photo ("personally signed to you in 14k gold ink), a pair of satin Rhondapanties, newsletter and membership card. Address: P.O. Box 24532, New Orleans, LA 70184-4532.

Debra Lamb. You loved Lamb's interview (FF 1:4). For further information about her fan club, send a legal-sized s.a.s.e. to 18633 Ventura Blvd., Suite 1240, Encino, CA 91436.

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Melissa Moore. A favorite of Joe Bob Briggs', Moore's B-watching appeal has spanned shockers (HARD TO DIE) and chop-socky (ANGEL FIST). Send a s.a.s.e. for information: 11258 Ventura Blvd., B-389, Studio City, CA 91604.

F A T A L E

Editor's note: Steve Bodrowski would like to enlighten readers that some submissions, printed in last issue's "Fatal Attractions" page, should be credited to other FF contributors. He would also like to alert readers that some of his own reports were edited or created. Sample criticism:

Ami Dolenz, daughter of former "Monkees" Mickey Dolenz, describes making back-to-back horror films (CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT, TICKETS, WITCHBOARD II, STEPMONSTER) as "great fun." Would the young actress voluntarily add another genre credit to her resume? "Definitely," she replies. "I love scary movies. I pick movies because I like doing them. I should pick them more for my career. I guess, but don't take the business seriously at all. It's a good part or a good experience, then I'll do it." In fact, Dolenz recently signed up for PUNKHEAD II. She'll also shoot extra footage for a video game adaptation of the movie.

At any rate, an editor, I take full responsibility and traditionally blame lack of space for the cuts. Steve may be soon engaged in the art of pruning himself, he recently turned editor of *Image-Movies*, the sister publication of *Cinefantastique*. Greeting Steve's past work, and his genuine affection for the genre, *Image-Movies* should be a class act—not to mention a "can't miss" proposition for B film addicts.

♦**DARK IS THE NIGHT** plays up Shannon Tweed, *Playboy's* 1992 Playmate of the Year, with Sandart Bergman (*CONAN THE BARBARIAN*). Tweed, Empress of the Erotic Thriller (*NIGHT EYES 2* & 3), plays a repressed secretary who transforms into a possessed vixen "It was a lot of fun to play a witch-bitch from hell," grinned Tweed.

Shannon Tweed, with Fred Olen Ray, shines through **DARK IS THE NIGHT**.



Julie Strain in **LAST IMPRESSIONS**

"because you not only get to do things you wouldn't do, but, since you're possessed, things nobody would do! It would be easy to take it over the edge, but our director (Fred Olen Ray) didn't pull me down much, except for one scene where I didn't have any lines. I couldn't contain myself—it's hard to stand there and nod—so he had to shut me up." The statuesque actress enjoyed working with co-star Bergman. "We have some tense scenes together. I hope they show up that way on film," said Tweed. Regarding her career, as the star of direct-to-video horror and softcore entertainment, Tweed comments, "Well, they're not A-films, but they're not C-films! The most you can do is pick parts where you might have some fun—or be in town to see your kids! And don't take it too damn seriously!"

♦Bergman followed up **NIGHT** with another Fred Olen Ray thriller, **INNER SANCTUM II**. "In the first movie," she explains, "I got to play the good girl. In this one, I'm playing the bad girl, but you don't know that until the very end. Through the whole story, you think I'm nice, then I dress up as a man. I've been secretly in love with it's **PSYCHO** in reverse!"

♦Claudia Christian (**HXED, THE HIDDEN**, et al) has translated her femme fatale persona to the tube. Cast opposite Faye Dunaway in a **COLUMBO** episode, Christian reveals her character as "kind of a red herring, because you think we're lesbian lovers until the end. I think it's a little more risqué than most **COLUMBO**'s." Christian has also landed the role of "female commander" in the recent **BABYLON 5** series. Most

regretably, the space voyage will sail sans Blaine Barron and Tamiyo Tenta (**FF 14**), both of whom starred in the pilot.

♦Singer Sheena Easton ("For Your Eyes Only") has made her horror debut in Showtime's **BODY BAGS**. Easton, directed by John Carpenter, co-stars with Stacy Keach in the "hair" episode of the anthology. The scenario involves a cure for baldness that has some unfortunate side effects: "This is my first foray into the genre," smiled Easton. "What drew me to my particular segment was that the script was really funny. No woman would be able to relate to my character. Don't worry, during 'Your Time Here' look wonderful' combed that way."

♦Rosanna Arquette (**BLACK RAINBOW**) stars in **THE WRONG MAN**, a hard-boiled tale of lust and betrayal. Arquette, playing a flirtatious wife who dreams of eluding her abusive husband, was obligated to disguise for the camera. "I don't particularly find it comfortable," she explained. "In the movie, it was really required. I asked Jim McBride, who directed, if I could have a body double. He said, 'No, we really need to shoot you doing the scene.' There are a lot of women out there who don't have their own worth and have to use their sexuality, and that's what I was playing—a person quite pitiful in a lot of ways. It was great to put myself into somebody's skin like that."

♦Gabrielle Anwar and Meg Tilly, the stars of **BODY SNATCHERS**, are among the femme fatales cast in Showtime's **FALLEN ANGELS**. Produced by Sydney Pollack, the show's six separate half-hour episodes are adapted from classic stories by Raymond Chandler, Jim Thompson and Cornell Woolrich. Laura Dern (**JURASSIC PARK**), Bonnie Bedelia (**DIE HARD**) and Isabelle Rossellini combine femininity with fire now. Rossellini, directed by Tom Cruise, plays a sexy bombshell in "The Fightening Females" segment. Her reason for appearing on cable? "I am lucky if I get a film a year," admitted the **BLUE VELVET** star. "As an actress, I would like to play many more things. This was an opportunity—I did Tom's film and another one for Showtime, directed by Laura Dern—for me to play different parts. So I get to be other people more often than once a year."

♦**LAST IMPRESSIONS** is basically "MY DINNER WITH ANDRÉ in hell." Helmed by Donald G. Jackson (**HILL COMES TO FROGTOWN**), the premise

involves a dinner conversation between two sleazy horror directors (one played by **TAXI's** Jeff Conaway) who are planning to shoot their next gorefest, **SATAN CLAUS**. Rest assured, Julie Strain (**FF 12**), in an extended cameo as a devil, will provide enough nudity to disguise any "art house" pretensions.

Submissions by FF contributors #1's under wraps, but a movie tentatively titled **FEMMES FATALES** is scheduled for production later this year. We've agreed to reveal only the following information: Yes, the movie is tied-in with this magazine (a female FF reporter becomes embroiled in "a



WITCHCRAFT's Carolyn Taylor will also star in **Part II**

blooze adventure"). The cast is an ensemble of your favorite B-Queens: Rola Karelzky, the writer/director of **THE REE'S NOTHING OUT THERE** (**FF 13**), wears the same dual hats for this "sexy romp on Nigel Kneale-type fantasy."

♦Diane Vincent is **DARKANGEL**. "I say, vicious collaborator of the night." Produced and directed by Andy Rodriguez, the martial arts/psychological thriller is budgeted at \$117,000. "It's a bargain," notes the p.p. dept., "compared to the Hollywood average of more than \$25 million per feature film." Vincent's character, burdened with "a lifetime of Ingegrates," spends her evenings "in seamy apparel, looking for trouble." She finds it. A video release is scheduled for October



EXORCISING THE SEXPOT IMAGE

"BOUND AND GAGGED" IS HER LATEST FILM, BUT GINGER LYNN ALLEN IS VERY UNRESTRAINED!

BY LAWRENCE GREENBERG



"Photographed in the mid-'80s, this shot was resurrected for the *VICE ACADEMY* 3 poster," noted the film's director, Rick Sciano

"If I were a man, I don't know that I'd be able to go out with me," admitted Ginger Lynn Allen, "but, as a woman—and as me—I hope people don't judge me by that."

That, for the uninitiated, is a notorious X-rated film career that, by Allen's estimation, spans too many movies. Unlike other performers in the adult industry, the former Ginger Lynn is not a victim but a survivor. Nevertheless, the only question in this conservative, middle-class interviewer's mind is why? Why did an amicable, intelligent and attractive woman have to sink to porno pictures? I'm dying

to know the answer, but have trouble popping the question. "Ummm,"—my heart beats faster as I broach the subject—"Can we talk a little about the adult film years?" There I asked it. "Depends on what you want to talk about," smiles Allen. "Ask me a question and maybe I'll answer it." Then she laughs. I'm instantly put at ease.

Allen was the legal age of 21 when she was approached to do her first adult film. "At the time," she recounted, "I laughed and said, 'Give me a break, I'm better than that!' Then I met some people who were good actors and who I respected and admired." ("Like whom, I wondered.") "Back then," she continued, "I thought that I could do it in a way that wouldn't be degrading to women and still become an

actress. I took it seriously, I guess. And two years later, I thought, 'I'm better than this. What was I thinking?' Then I moved on."

When auditioning for a legitimate film, does she find that casting directors and producers prejudice a former porn star? "A lot of doors were closed," recalled Allen. "People are always going to talk and have preconceived notions. If I live 'up' to them, then it's my own fault and I deserve to be wherever I stay."

But Allen is the first to admit her past has opened as many doors as it has closed. "People were curious. Quite a few of the roles I've landed have been ones where people have called me in, out of curiosity, and wind up casting me."

The tenuous Allen, determined to "go straight and



Moonwalking as Marilyn: Allen has recently produced GALLERY LINGERS, a "high-budget series of seven shorts."



Allen was featured in FOLLOW THROUGH, an MTV music video involving the disappearing rainforest.

be in movies," sent her head shot to every agent in town. "Out of the 100 resumes I sent out," she explained, "the response has been 25%. I took my entertainment attorney and interviewed agents, rather than having them interview me. Due to the great response, I had a confidence most actors don't have when they're looking for an agent."

During the past few years, Allen has surfaced in low-budget movies tailored for the video market. "I've done quite a few of what you'd call B-movies in the process of getting where I am today," she said. "I'm proud of some of them. Did you see HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD II? It's a good little film, surprisingly."

Allen is equally candid about the turkeys that have been served up on her filmography. For example, take EDGAR ALLAN POE'S BURIED ALIVE (1989)—please! "As we shot the film, I thought this was going to be a great role for me," said Allen, who supported Robert Vaughn and Donald Pleasance. "But when I saw it, it was horrible. Almost embarrassing."

Her link with the VICE ACADEMY trilogy has earned Allen a kinship with B-movie addicts (not to mention a B-minus nomination, for Best Actress, on Rhonda's Shear's UP ALL NIGHT). Part I was a surprise hit, spawning big video sales and two of the most unnecessary sequels in recent film history. Allen contributed not only a screen presence, but a comic aptitude that may have startled her critics.

Unfortunately, lightning doesn't always strike twice. Allen reteamed with Rick Sloane, director of the VICE ACADEMY series, for the barely released MIND, BODY AND SOUL. "It's the worst film I've ever done," sighed Allen. "The direction was hideous. The editing—my dog could do better." Allen, cast as the victim, costarred with Wings Hauser in the predictable potboiler

Allen describes
HOLLYWOOD
BOULEVARD II as
"a good little film."

involving satanic cults. One brutal rape scene was a contrivance to get Allen out of her clothes. "I had a lot of problems with that scene," she groaned. "Everyone on the set did, as well. The actor who played the rapist was very apologetic afterwards, because it really upset me to the point of tears."

Since the film was shot simultaneously with VICE

ACADEMY III, Allen spent her mornings performing slapstick for VICE, and doing her "scream queen" shtick, during afternoons shifts, for MIND, BODY AND SOUL. "To do two films is hard enough," said Allen. "But when they're of two different genres, and you've got one director who directs in a BRADY BUNCH-style, it made things

difficult."

But Allen's perseverance has been rewarded with BOUND AND GAGGED, scheduled for release later this year. "The film," she smiled, "is basically about battered women, suicide, betrayal and kidnapping. Your basic elements for a good comedy." The actress was cast as a bisexual who is divided between two lovers; an obsessed girlfriend and an abusive husband. No formulaic T & A scenes, no pratfalls, nothing even remotely related to her past work.

"It's not the blonde bimbo," said Allen, referring to her most challenging role to date. "It's about a real person and the extremes people in love go to. I was able to create a character who had a lot of depth. She's strong, she's insecure, she's weak, she's intelligent. There are so many elements to this woman."

continued on page 60

Allen joins Cliff Genter, who played her father, on a VICE ACADEMY II location.



Allen and Linnea Quigley, VICE ACADEMY I and II stars, never got along. But Allen and PART III co-star Liz Kaitan (right) were buddies.





M

...BUT SARAH

BY STEVE BODROWSKI

Boris Karloff, Claude Rains, Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee; their "merchant of menace" repete is as pronounced as their British accents. But their native countrywomen, who are similarly linked to the genre, have often been relegated to stereotypical scream queen roles or subordinate treatment

As CONAN THE DESTROYER's Queen Taramis, Douglas vows to resurrect Conan's lover (played in the earlier film by Sandahl Bergman)



EGA BAD!

DOUGLAS WANTS THE EVEN MEANER, MALE-ORIENTED ROLES.

As a result of her high-profile projects—including a role on TV's *FALCON CREST*—Sarah Douglas has earned more respect than her British predecessors. But even Douglas is routinely cast as a supporting villain; in one of her most visible roles, as the wicked Ursa of *SUPERMAN I* and *II*, she answers to Terence Stamp's General Zod. "I'm always the bad sidekick female," she complained. "Like in *BEASTMASTER II*, Wings Hauser is Mr. Evil and I'm the sidekick. I just did a film called *THE LOST STOREHOUSE*, a fantasy-adventure set in the 15th century, with David Warner, who I knew in Stratford-on-Avon. He was one of the finest Hamlets there ever was, a wonderful Shakespearean actor. Just before I was cast in it, I said the man's role he plays would be ideal for me. They were very interested in the idea, but there just wasn't time to change it. I'd love to play one of those male roles! If I'm going to continue being bad, at least let me be mega-bad!"

Douglas recently added another rascal to her repertory; as Lieutenant Colonel Sinclair, she creates a breed of militant zombies in *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III*. Ironically, the polished Brit approved the role "to lose my Englishness a bit. I'm in an American uniform doing a quasi-American accent, because I don't profess to doing an authentic American accent. This was a good exercise because I have to look at something and figure out what makes it sound not as English.



Arnold Schwarzenegger, as *CONAN THE DESTROYER*, meets Douglas' sultry sorceress. Turning mega-bad, Arnold triumphed as *THE TERMINATOR*.

"Of course, one reason I'm doing this is for the old fans. There's a slew of fans who follow one's fantasy films. This is another in the great succession of gory films that they all see, and that I didn't know I'd be in. The very first science fiction convention I did was after *SUPERMAN*. They all arrived in Ursa costumes. The people today are the same

sort, they're so loyal. They really have seen things I don't remember having done. They'll come up with photographs and I think, 'What was that?' I didn't realize I'd been in so many of those."

Despite more diverse TV and stage work, Douglas' film career spans a body of work almost entirely related to the Fantasy Cinema. She

made her genre debut in 1974's *THE FINAL PROGRAMME* (released in the U.S. as *THE LAST DAYS OF MAN ON EARTH*), which cast Jon Finch as Michael Moorecock's science fiction hero, Jerry Cornelius. "I played the sister of Jon Finch, and he kills me," Douglas recalls. "Just the other day—I was doing another picture called *RAVEN DANCE*—I was lying on a bed doing exactly the same thing, and it all came back in a flood. I told the girl I was working with, Veronica Cartwright, about it. She told me Jon Finch did the very first day of *ALIEN*, but he got asthma or something and they replaced him. He was supposed to be this big star, and I was deeply in love with him."

The film was adapted, designed and directed by Robert Fuest, probably better known for helming *THE ABOMINABLE DOCTOR PHIBES* and its sequel. "He was wonderful," smiled Douglas. "I remember the enormity of it. A lot of people start on a tiny little stage. This was a serious movie stage. I remember being absolutely overwhelmed by it, and he was very sweet and gentle. It was a great death scene, with a hypodermic needle in my heart and a lot of body-jerking and overacting—which, of course, I've continued to do for the rest of my life."

Reflecting on the volume of genre credits that followed, Douglas admits that she feels typecast, however, the actress expresses some solace that her roles have stressed larger-than-life characters. "I've never man-



Douglas played Shandora in 1986's *SOLARIS*, a futuristic tale about revolt and rediscovering.

aged to get out of the whole realm, but it's all very camp and I love it it all," she explains. "A film like *SUPERMAN* is very tongue-in-cheek. They're cartoon characters. To bring them to life, they've got to have humor and I can't seem to get rid of mine. The very first TV special I did, *DRACULA* (1974) with Jack Palance, that was when I knew I was doomed never to be serious. I was a barpy, one of the vampire brides, along with Virginia Wetherell who remained a dear, close friend. I remember they got so furious. Every time I went to bite Simon Ward's neck, I left the fangs in his shoulder. They said, 'You have to spit them out!' So I would snarl and spit them over his shoulder."

Douglas played the determined "Lady Charlotte" in *PEOPLE THAT TIME FORGOT* (1977), adapted from the Edgar Rice Burroughs novel. Her token feminist character, the screenwriter's invention, was a trendy contrivance, providing little more than an unflattering contrast to Dana Gillespie's busty cave woman. "Yes, that's exactly

right," Douglas acknowledges. "In fact, I had the Carrie Fisher bairdo, the earmuffs, before *STAR WARS*. At the very end, Patrick Wayne finally sees me with my hair down."

Upon completion of the film on a Wednesday, Douglas started work on *SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE* the following Thursday. The project kept her occupied for the next 17 months. "In my early 20s, I thought this is the way it's supposed to be," Douglas recounts, "—you work forever. I went from one job to the next, which, in England, was very rare because there were no jobs. Then I did *SUPERMAN* and nothing happened. On the whole, I didn't capitalize on the image. I think if I had been in America immediately afterward, I would have had managers and a publicist. I would have presented an image so that people would have recognized Ursula AND Sarah Douglas."

"What happened was I sat around for a couple of years in England, doing bits and bobs but nothing interesting. Of course, finally, you're just not working. After two years I said, 'I will go to America for three months.' I was also broke, because in England you don't get paid the same way the Americans get paid. So I arrived in the States. Nobody said, 'What have you been doing for two years?' Everybody said, 'Wow, you're the girl from *SUPERMAN*!' They embraced me. I gave it three



Douglas (with Terence Stamp and Jack O'Halloran) in *SUPERMAN II*. "After that film," she said, "they called me 'Superstitch.'"

months. The day I was leaving at eight o'clock in the evening, they called me at twelve o'clock and said, 'You've got *FALCON CREST*!' From that minute on, I did massive amounts of publicity to say, 'The *FALCON CREST* girl is the same girl who did *SUPERMAN*.' Then came *CONAN THE DESTROYER* and *SOLARIS*—they were all that kind of film, and they were all villains. So what do you do? You want to work, so you capitalize on what you're good at. Unfortunately, I'm very good at villains."

More unfortunate than the typecasting is the fact that Douglas' more recent vehicles have not been worthy of her talents. The low-budget affairs just can't approximate the luxury levels of her *SUPERMAN* films. "It was the best experience

as an actress, because I actually reshot a great deal of *SUPERMAN* working with two directors, one of whom—Dick Donner (*SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE*)—is very much an actor's director. The other, Dick Lester (*SUPERMAN II*) is very technical. Having said that, I responded well to Lester. He just told me what to do and I did it, probably because I was so fearful of him. To shoot certain scenes twice was extraordinary—I don't know what other actresses can honestly say they've experienced that—but that whole *SUPERMAN* thing is so far removed from everything else that ever happened."

"I guess it's great that *SUPERMAN* will go on forevermore being shown on television—it would probably be even greater if I were getting residuals because in England, at the time, you didn't. So the English didn't get them, the Americans do. And you'll know which ones they are because they have very big houses in Beverly Hills...and I'm doing *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III* out in God knows where!"

"But I will happily do more of these. I hasten to add that I've changed my opinion since *FALCON CREST*. I was very touchy, and I turned things down left, right and center—and I could afford not to do them

Douglas, with Jon Finch, in *THE LAST DAYS OF MAN ON EARTH* (1974). "I've got the film on tape," laughs Douglas. "I looked so young!"



God, I'd give anything for half those jobs now. Obviously, you don't want to be in terrible movies, and I know I've done one or two that were. The only reason I did them was purely financial. It's a sign of the times that when I tell people I'm doing RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III. Instead of saying, 'Oh my God, you're what?' they say, 'Wow, it's great that you're working!' I really think the European attitude is just to keep working. Indeed, in England there's so little work you just grab anything. So I don't feel I should have to justify myself. I act...that's what I do."

Douglas attained her current perspective on employment while considering whether or not to appear in THE RETURN OF SWAMP THING (1989). "That's a very interesting story," she recalls. "There was a strike that summer in Hollywood, so nothing was happening at all. I was in Stratford-on-Avon, my home town, and I'd just been sent the script for RETURN OF SWAMP THING. A young actor, who I knew from Shakespeare Theatre, came up to me. He asked, 'What are you reading?' I said, 'RETURN OF SWAMP THING. What a load of drivel!' He said, 'Do you know how many of us, carrying spears down at Stratford Theatre, long for a producer to come along and say, 'I want you to star in RETURN OF SWAMP THING?'' He put it so in proportion for me."

Douglas subsequently appeared in BEASTMASTER II, an inferior follow-up to a film hardly worthy of a sequel. "For all intents and purposes, it was okay," said Douglas. "I had a great time with Wings and it was very tongue-in-cheek—big hair and big costumes. It was difficult, because it was very similar to CONAN THE DESTROYER. CONAN was a serious picture; if you're going to do that kind of thing, it's nice to do the big budget ones. I've

"I would love to play one of those male roles! If I'm going to go on being bad, then at least let me be mega-bad."



Douglas was dressed to kill in CONAN THE DESTROYER; her costumes, designed by John Blomfield, reinforced the "mega-bad" image.

kind of done my career in reverse, working my way down."

Douglas would prefer to invest the strength, reserved for her "bad girl" roles, and further develop that characteristic for equally cogent heroines; "I love strong women. Why isn't there a female Arnold Schwarzenegger or Stallone? They just don't seem

to want them. You have kickboxing women, I suppose. Sigourney Weaver definitely made a difference. And LA FEMME NIKITA, which I didn't particularly adore but which everybody went crazy for. So what if there's a gun-toting woman running around? There's a whole area for strong women, not necessarily gun-toting. My moment will come

when they get back to making movies like they made in the '40s, with strong women with a quick wit and a sharp tongue. Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, they were strong and they had that very wicked tongue.

"But the minute Joann Collins came to America and did DYNASTY, it shifted from being quick-witted to being bitchy. She invented the bitch thing. I would not want to think that my humor is ever misconstrued as being bitchy. It should be seen for what it is, an English humor. The move from humorous to bitchy is not one I want to make. It is a fine line. In FALCON CREST, they had me as the mean one but it didn't quite work, because people liked my character. So they ended up not knowing what to do, and I ended up with a lot of hair and earrings and not a lot to do, which is when I left the series."

Though uncertain about the future, Douglas has resigned herself to a positive deployment of her stereotype: "All I know is that whenever I play the villain, however mean or wicked, it's okay as long as kids still feel I'm approachable. With children, I have very much that same sort of character—slightly fearful, to make them behave, but they know at the end of the day that I'm cool. I would like to think that comes through on screen; however wicked and mean, there is a human side to the character...something other than stereotypical evil." Regarding her LIVING DEAD character, Douglas admits, "I have to tell you, I haven't found anything in this yet. At the moment, all I'm doing is putting drills in people's heads, so I might be out of my depth with this role!"

She acknowledges that her appeal is at least partially attributable to the traditional English villain who combines courtly manner with mayhem. "It's like swearing," smiles Douglas. "I can get away with saying,

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THE MAKING OF RHONDA

A COMPOSITE OF MY FAVORITE FEMMES FATALES

BY RHONDA SHEAR

My mother must have had prophetic insight into what I would someday become, after all, she named me Rhonda after the ultimate B-Queen, Rhonda Fleming. There were thousands of other Rhondas in my generation, but I was determined from an early age that I was going to be different. I knew this from the time I heard applause at my first dance recital. One day, I would join the ranks of my childhood idols

In time, I was to borrow a little from each of these luminaries (imitation being the highest form of flattery), so I began by copying the cat-eyed look of the statuesque and sultry **Raquel Welch** (everyone told me I looked like her). No one can forget Raquel, clad in a skimpy, prehistoric bikini, emerging from the sea in **ONE MILLION YEARS B.C.** (1966).

Brigitte Bardot achieved popularity as a "figure of unbridled sensuality." Her breakthrough movie, **AND GOD CREATED WOMAN** (1957), was burdened with censorship and the Legion of Decency's condemnation. Of course, the film's controversy boosted Bardot into a

sexual icon. Though she retired from film 20 years ago, I concur with BB's biographer **Tony Crawley**: "Bardot is untouched by age or reason—and, surely, always will be."

Another popular sex kitten of the '60s was **Jane Fonda**, whose sexual barometer has oscillated from virtuous heroine (**CAT BALLOU**, 1965) to naive wif (**BARBARELLA** 1967). Jane eventually traded in her pin-up persona for credibility as a dramatic actress. Graduating to dramatic roles, she nabbed an Oscar for **KLUTE** and subsequently exiled **Barbarella's** existence to trivia games (not to mention USA broadcasts).

Besides having a sensational body and dynamic personality, **Ann Margret** is also an exemplary singer and dancer. Ann's early "jungle" roles, including **KITTEN WITH A WHIP** (1964) and **THE SWINGER** (1966), were eclipsed by her Oscar nomination for **CARNAL KNOWLEDGE** (1971).

Having the "sex kitten" look down pat, I was finally on my way to becoming a full-fledged *femme fatale*—or so I thought. It was to be years later, after moving to Hollywood, before the total transition would take place. Something was still miss-

ing! They say "inside every person is a thin one waiting to get out." Inside of me, there was a blonde person waiting to get in! I thought like a blonde, I felt like a blonde. All it took was a bottle of hair color to make me one! A visit to the beauty salon, and the deed was done.

What does this blondness mean to me? Being blonde captures a youthful presence that we all remember from our childhood, the cheerleader, the girl-next-door. She matures into the same light, airy child, all grown up in a woman's body. Is she a bimbo, a diva? I don't think so. These are smart women who know how to use their sensuality (dumb as a fox). All of my favorite blondes are the incorrupt, non-vamp variety. They are good friends and companions, and are never threatening to other women.

Foremost in this category is the legendary, last of the great Hollywood sex symbols, **Marilyn Monroe** (her very name is synonymous with the essence of blondeness). Little girl, vulnerable, delicious, wildly sexual...She is all these things. It was her chaste demeanor, hiding behind a facade of physical lust,

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In 1967, print and TV ads reminded us "Jane Fonda is BARBARELLA" (top). Raquel Welch releases on the set of THE LAST OF SHEILA (1971, center). Brigitte Bardot in 1960's COME DANCE WITH ME! (bottom)

A full-page photograph of Rhonda Shear. She is wearing a bright red, long-sleeved jumpsuit with a wide, gold-colored chain belt. She has blonde hair and is smiling at the camera. Her right hand is on her hip, and her left hand is near her head. The background is a textured, greyish-blue.

Rhonda Shear, the
obscene hostess
of USA's UP ALL
RIGHT and founder
of the B-Movie
music awards.



Suzie Owens pre-
pares to put the
bite on her boyfriend
This scene was cut
from **THEY SHIT**
to circumvent an
NC-17 rating

Sex, Censorship,
Salmon from Outer Space

women WITH BITE

**THEY BITE, "THE PLAYER OF
HORROR FILMS," WAS HOOKED
WITH AN NC-17 RATING.**

BY BRUCE G. HALLENBECK

Same ole' story. Fish meets girl, fish lusts after girl, fish loses girl. It's the saga of the Gillman, spawned by CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (1954) and reprised in shoestring productions like BLOOD WATERS OF DOCTOR Z (1972) and CURSE OF THE SWAMP CREATURE (1966). The subgenre proved a nice source of revenue for no less than 20th Century-Fox. Capitalizing on horror films and AIP's BEACH PARTY trend, Fox probably released HORROR OF PARTY BEACH (1964) to recoup losses from their epic misfire, CLEOPATRA (1963). Cast as a baker, former stuntman Robin Boston Barron was also hired to play two or three fish monsters—"over and over!"—because there were only a couple of costumes to go around. "You were in like flint if you had a rubber fetish," recalled Barron. "Of course, it didn't pay scale." HORROR was ground out in two weeks and edited in another two. Filmed in April, it was in theatres by June.

New World's contributions to the "fishmen" chronicles, HUMANIDS FROM THE DEEP (1980) and SCREAMERS (1979), were saddled with post-production problems. Barbara Peters, director of HUMAN-

IDS, accused producer Roger Corman of adding "t&s" to her cut of the movie. Extra footage was added to SCREAMERS, formerly titled SOMETHING WAITS IN THE DARK, when customers complained the film was bereft of a scene promised in the ad campaign ("You will see a man turned inside out").

The latest Gillman movie, THEY BITE, is a spoof of its predecessors (this time, it's intentionally funny). Shot in Florida, the black comedy involves low-rent filmmakers embroiled in the production of an X-rated monster movie (not so ironically, porn star Ron Jeremy

Christina Vonono had previously worked with THEY BITE director Brett Piper on an uncompleted film, SHOCK-O-RAMA.





Former Playboy centerfold, Shasta Owens, was cast because "she was antiseptic about doing the PMO minister scene."



plays a pivotal role). The cast of the adult film, attired in phony "fish monster" gear, are upstaged by authentic Gillmen from outer space.

The plot, however, takes a backseat to the in-jokes, tailored for B-movie aficionados. Less amusing is the producer's beef with the MPAA; he later charged that the board "is prejudicial to independently produced pictures. Studio product is given the green light for scenes that are disapproved for the independents." And then there's the divided vision of *THEY BITE*, i.e. producer vs. director.

PART I: THE DIRECTOR'S BITING COMMENTS

He helmed *THEY BITE*, but his personal appraisal of the film is uniquely humble. "It has its points. I just can't look at it anymore, because I keep thinking of the movie it should have been."

Brett Piper is a self-described "eccentric," whose *NYMPHOID BARBARIAN IN DINOSAUR HELL*, picked up by Troma Inc., may be the only dinosaur movie ever photographed in New England. In addition to writing and directing, Piper animated the monsters for *NYMPHOID BARBARIAN* and *MYSTERIOUS PLANET*, the latter shot for \$5,000 and released to European video in 1982. The filmmaker admitted he was often at odds with William Links, producer of *THEY BITE*. Links, a Chicago-based film broker formerly linked to adult films (*DEEP THROAT* among them), also served as executive producer of the 1987 horror anthology, *DEADTIME STORIES*.

"It wasn't so much that things didn't go right," reflected Piper on *THEY BITE*'s production. "We got a lot of breaks. It's just that we had somebody blocking us every step of the way."

Clips for *THEY BITE*'s film-within-a-film were shot in Piper's native New Hampshire. "We were shooting inserts of the fish monsters at

"Links said he wanted to make a movie with fish monsters and tits, because movies with fish monsters and tits never lost money."



Blake Pickett stars in *DARK UNIVERSE*. The film is described as "THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON meets THE CREEPING UNKNOWN."

the local YMCA swimming pool up here," said Piper. The inserts were edited into a black-and-white trailer for *INVASION OF THE FISH FUCKERS*, the invention of "the porn producer" character who insists that sex, horror and violence is a "can't miss" combination. According to Piper, the real producer's insight echoed Links' commercial speculations for *THEY BITE*. "Links called me up and

said he wanted to make a movie with fish monsters and tits, because movies with fish monsters and tits never lose money." Piper calls himself a "hired gun," noting *THEY BITE* is the first time he ever worked for another producer. "Actually," he related, "the idea wasn't mine. I just made the movie. The film's budget was about \$130,000 of which I would say \$30,000 or \$40,000 was just wasted.

Aside from that, everything couldn't have gone better. The shoot only took two and a half weeks. We got all kinds of great breaks which were then loused up.

"I won't name any names, but let's just say if somebody was intentionally trying to sabotage the film, he couldn't have done a better job. I don't want to keep harping on that, but people who have dealt with Mister X sit around and swap stories like Vietnam veterans."

In addition to experiencing problems with "Mister X," Piper revealed he had reservations about casting "Ron Jeremy's not fun to work with," said Piper. "He's a pretty talented actor, to give him credit. But he wants to be a star, and he wants to be the director, and he's in your face about it every second."

"Links wanted to get Traci Lords for this movie, and I kept insisting that we needed someone who could act. He kept saying, 'Well, the character is supposed to be a porno actress. Traci was a porno actress.' That's like saying, 'We need a guy to play the dentist, so if we get my dentist, we'll be all set.' I kind of insisted on Christina Veronca, whom I'd worked with before. She's funny and a piece of cake to work with."

In the film's only provocative (but decidedly anti-erotic) scene, former Playboy Playmate Susie Owens sheds her clothes to reveal a physical mutation; it seems her vagina has transformed into a carnivorous, toothy gargoyle. Owens' boyfriend learns, too late, of the bungary appendage, during their lovemaking scene—chomp!—nothing comes between them. "That scene," said Piper, "was not in the original script," perhaps explaining its dismissal in the film as a nightmare. "It was something Links called me up with at about 10 o'clock at night and shouted, 'I got a great idea! When the monsters attack women, their pussies grow teeth and bite



Shari Finkelstein has been described as "Florida's resident B-Queen."

guys' dicks off! And I said, 'Yeah, sure, Bill. Take a valium and call me later! But it's in there. To be honest, it was fun to shoot. My only objection was that it had nothing to do with the rest of the story.'

PART II: THE PRODUCER BITES BACK

RASHOMON-like, producer William Links recounts his own interpretation of *THEY BITE*'s genesis: "I told him [Piper] that I wanted a film that was in the league of *HUMANOID*s FROM THE DEEP, *CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON*—that type of picture. Originally, I didn't realize we were going to be producing a parody. Brett

put that parody aspect into the script. Looking back now, it's probably best that we did it as a parody because this particular story, done straight, would have been miserable. So he brought a lot of levity to the story and he did write the story itself."

Links' contribution to the story—the "vaginas with bite" sequence—has collided with the MPAA's standards for a more moderate (R-) rating. "There's a famous scene in the picture with Susie Owens where she becomes what we refer to as 'the PMS Monster.' The MPAA thought the presence of that was a bit strong, and most people seem to agree. Aside from that, they haven't

"Links wanted to get Traci Lords for this movie, and I kept insisting that we needed someone who could act."

asked for any other cuts. But let's face it, Sharon Stone shows even more than her pubic hair in *BASIC INSTINCT*, and the movie—produced by a major—gets an R-rating. In our film, Susie Owens wears a prosthetic mask over her crotch—I mean, it's not the real thing and you see no pubic hair—and we have to chop it all out."

Links has promised that, though Owens' nightmare sequence will be eliminated from the R-rated cut, it will be restored in the NC-17 video release. "To be quite frank, it won't interrupt the continuity, because that whole sequence was an add-on to the script."

When addressed with questions regarding production problems, Links bursts out in sardonic laughter. "We were thrown off a location," he roars, "from the Gibson Hotel in Appalachicola, which was a beautiful historic hotel. At first, we were very welcome there. What happened was, Ron Jeremy was more identifiable than any of us ever thought. The local fishermen showed up one day, bringing in oysters and

yelling, 'Hey Ron! You're our hero! You and Sly!' At first, it was fine and dandy. But then a local church group, almost like a scene in our movie, became convinced we were shooting a porno film. The hotel knew we weren't making a porno film, but didn't want to wrestle with the townspeople. So we were asked to leave, and we ended up working in a hotel on St. George's Island. The exterior of the movie still shows the Gibson Hotel."

One of the bones of contention between producer and director was Links' insistence upon casting "name talent." Linda Blair was among the prospects, but the director resisted. "Brett told me that if we used Linda Blair," recalls Links, "he couldn't promise any kind of performance, that she wouldn't do that good a job. Our leading lady, Donna Fretschler, probably did as good a job as could be expected from anyone. It's just that I wish she would establish herself in this business, so that I could cash in on her fame."

Links tended to gloss over the differences be-

Shari Finkelstein on the first day of shooting. The actress, who later loses her blintz, was wary of photographers snapping nude shots.



tween himself and Piper, at least to a certain extent. "He didn't think the nightmare sequence with Susie Owens belonged," Links went on. "But after it was shot, he admitted that it was quite striking."

"I would say—and Brett wouldn't argue with this point—that Brett is used to working on his own. I think it's very difficult for him to work with anyone else. He's used to doing something very small, taking a lot of time and basically answering to himself. I think it was difficult for him to have to answer to a producer or investor or whatever."

Links admits there was a "personality clash" between himself and Piper. He added, however, "Some of the actors said it was the best film they had worked on. Brett also said it was the best crew he'd ever worked with." After a pause, he wryly chuckles, "Probably excluding myself."

PART III: ACTRESSES WITH BITE

Blake Pickett. She's a triple threat: actress-model-stuntwoman. "I consider myself an actress, first," Blake Pickett will remind you. "I'm an actress who does stunts. I'm just a little crazy." In *THEY BITE*'s pre-credits scene, Pickett poses for a flirting photographer; after she peels off her top, Pickett is scooped-up by a fish monster and dragged underwater. The sequence required four days of shoot-



"Susie Owens," explained *THEY BITE* producer Bill Links, "was easy to work with at the time of filming."

ing.

"I'd heard about this low-budget film going into production near Panama City [Florida]," recalls Pickett, "and I sent the company my resume and head shot. Bill Links called and said, 'We want you!' So I drove down for the weekend and did it. Brett Piper was a very good person to work with, especially considering the time

limit we had to work on this. It was very rushed."

Pickett also appeared in *HAUNTEDWREN*, an inexpensive slasher quickie that has surfaced only on Southern video shelves. Immediately after *THEY BITE*, she played a supporting role in *VAMPIRE TRAILER PARK*. Directed by Steve Latschaw, the black comedy's central character is a bulimic vampire.

Last December, Pickett again collaborated with director Latschaw on *DARK UNIVERSE*, a sci-fi thriller produced by Fred Olen Ray and Jim Wynorski. "I play a reporter who investigates what happened to an infected spaceship," Pickett explained. "An alien has taken over parts of a jungle with these little orange spores."

Latschaw, who shot both of his genre films in Florida, "would love to work with Blake again. When Pat Moran and I wrote *VAMPIRE TRAILER PARK*, we

wrote it around people we knew. And we thought Blake would probably have some fun playing a psychopathic teenager who spouts Zen philosophy. I'm really excited about her performance in *DARK UNIVERSE*."

Her roles in *THEY BITE* and the Latschaw movies notwithstanding, Pickett denies she watches horror films. Nevertheless, her link with the Fantasy Cinema is becoming indelible. Along with garnering a guest spot on USA-TV's *SWAMP THING* series, her performance in *VAMPIRE TRAILER PARK* earned Pickett a Breast Actress nomination from Joe Bob Briggs. But Pickett wasn't especially fond of her "exposure" in *THEY BITE*. "There was more nudity than I expected, but when you sign a contract—and don't read the fine print—there's not a whole lot you can do about it."

Bill Links described this scene as a "menage-a-trois, monster-style. This is one of the phony trailers from the *Sliver* video films."





"Christina Veronica," noted Linka, "had the physical assets that qualified her for the role. But she can also really act."

Christina Veronica: A veteran of softcore films, she was directed by the late Chuck Vincent (SEXPOT, PARTY INCORPORATED) and is more than a familiar face on PLAYBOY and ELEGANT BLUE videos. Christina Veronica is a scene stealer in *THEY BITE*, playing a porn actress with a sense of humor about herself and

her profession. One gets the impression the character was tailor-made for Veronica, herself a down-to-Earth and unpretentious personality.

During her first evening shoot, Veronica was required to perform her own stunt. "I was on a yacht, and I'm totally scared of the ocean!" said Veronica. "I

"I don't have problems with nudity...I'm not worried about what people are, or are not, gonna think if I take my clothes off."

said to Brett, 'I see in the script it says that my character jumps off the yacht and into the ocean. How are we going to do that?' And he said, 'Oh, you're going to jump off the yacht and into the ocean!' I said, 'No, I'm not!' And he said, 'Well, yeah, you are!' One of the guys told me he was a trained lifeguard, so it worked out."

But Veronica is accustomed to "always having to do stuff like that. They made me dress up like a chicken in *SEXPOT*. It was a costume party scene, with a bunch of extras, and they needed someone to wear the chicken costume. Because my character wasn't in the scene, and I couldn't be recognized in the costume, I got elected."

"I got painted up like a statue in the first movie I ever did (*TWO IDIOTS IN HOLLYWOOD*), and almost died of skin suffocation. They had to feed me chicken soup through a straw!"

Veronica described *THEY BITE* as a "fun" working experience. "Except," she recalled, "I had a really horrible cold when I arrived on location. I didn't want to eat anything. Every place had tons of seafood, which I hate! Every restaurant in the entire town smelled like fish, so I didn't want to eat

anything."

"Brett took me aside and said, 'We've got to talk. Everyone on the set thinks you're a speed freak.' They thought I was a hag speed freak, because I was constantly sniffing and not eating. But then the cold cleared up..."

Regarding the tension on the set, Veronica claims she "knew what was going on. Basically, I was just tap dancing between the two camps. For my part, everyone was real nice to me. From what I hear, I was the only person who had an open welcome on both sides of the camp."

Unlike Blake Pickett, Veronica had no qualms about performing in the buff. Shaking her head, she insists, "I don't have problems with nudity. I really don't. I wouldn't do anything exploitative, nothing that's disgusting or gross or embarrassing. I understand what we're doing as a whole, and I'm not worried about what people are—or are not—gonna think if I take my clothes off."

And Veronica suffered no repercussions while working on a film about fish monsters—even though she's terrified of fish.

Susie Owens. Her scene is relatively brief, but the film should profit from its controversy. Susie Owens may be remembered as "the girl with the teeth", at least in the unrated version of *THEY BITE*. A press release describes her as "A one time dumpy, dull nurse who, through an intense personal improvement program, became the *Playboy* centerfold for March of 1988."

Owens has also trans-

"We had problems shooting this scene with Blake Pickett," said Bill Linka, "especially with continuity."





AFTER THEY BITE: Susie Owens (above) played Cori in an updated version of *ELECTRA*. Blake Pickett (right) shot her BITE scenes in four days.





Christina Voronova, a B-movie veteran (*SEMPOT*, at left), carried a business-as-usual attitude about *THEY BITE*'s nude scenes.

a stir, because that's obviously not my body part! If it was...well, maybe that's why I'm single.

"I went through some pain for that role, but I was covered up and had a lot of fun. It was a [low-budget] movie. I didn't think it would ever get seen."

Nonetheless, Owens has no regrets about her provocative scene. Describing the delicate application of the vaginal makeup, Owens noted, "The prosthetics were made of latex, so I was sent to the restroom—being of sound mind and body—to see if it fit. Fortunately, my friend Vince Camiti played the boyfriend in that scene, which really helped.

"I went in and said, 'Let's shoot it,' and we did. There was only one thing that bothered me. The girlfriend of [porn star] Ron Jeremy loaned me her underwear for that scene. So I was glad the prosthetic was there—really glad there was something between me and her underwear.



Styler Owens as Fleaze, the comic book heroine.

formed into a print, calendar and poster model, a featured columnist for *Muscle and Fitness* magazine, and promoted as "the Golden Apple Girl" in the *Fleaze* comic book.

"I got the role (in *THEY BITE*) through Donald Farmer, although I never met him," Owens explained. Farmer, a director of low-budget films (*VAMPIRE COP*, *SCREAM DREAM*), took notice of Owens while perusing through her comics and posters at an L.A. bookstore. "He referred me to Bill Links," related Owens, "who offered me one of two roles. One was to be the model in the first scene, and I said, 'No, I don't want to be the model.' The other part sounded like it might create some controversy. Boy, was I right!"

Commenting on the MPAA furor, specifically the scene where her vagina turns in to a carnivorous demon, Owens reacts with amusement. "I think it's funny that it's causing such



"Though Steve Pickert was the last to be cast," said Bill Linka, "her scenes, as the sexy model, were the first to be shot."

"On the set," she grinned, "they treated me well. I know that Bill and Brett didn't get along. Bill has a tendency to be negative. Brett is more in my arena, while Bill is passed off at the world."

POSTSCRIPT

Despite the conflicts and the lack of a "name" star, *THEY BITE* emerges from the tide of made-for-video fodder as a rough, slightly tarnished pearl. Spoofing everything from "A" (*THE ABYSS*) to "Z" (*HORROR BEACH PARTY*), the film is leavened with dry wit and clever dialogue. Perhaps its most admirable accomplishment is something that \$40-\$50-million budgets can't dependably buy—an aptitude to entertain.

THEY BITE's first theatrical premiere is scheduled for Korea. A regional theatrical engagement in the U.S. and a video release (both R-rated and unrated), are currently under negotiation. □

"This is the only scene, with Susie Owens, that made it into *THEY BITE*'s R-rated cut," reported Bill Linka.



Susie Owens is more than decorative in *THEY BITE*—at least in the film's unrated version.



Whatever Happened to Rainbeaux?

THE DRIVE-IN QUEEN, WHO HEATED UP HORROR PIX, SUDDENLY VANISHED!

BY BRUCE G. HALLENBECK

Rainbeaux. She has a chameleon-type quality. Freckle-faced, girl-next-door in one movie, an alluring Aphrodite in the next. Sometimes a fragile beauty, sometimes a wild child. During the '70s, she was Queen of the Drive-In...

Fred Olen Ray, producer/director: "If I have any particular memory of Cheryl Rainbeaux Smith, it would certainly be seeing her in *THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS*, the most erotically charged film I had ever seen in my young life at the drive-ins. It was the kind of movie that made you sit up straight—or slump forward, depending on your mood—and she was great in it. Rainbeaux's films constantly dotted the outdoor screens for years, making her—along with Claudia Jennings—a drive-in favorite."

Suzanne Slater, actress: "I remember her films from junior high. Cheryl Smith—Cheryl Rainbeaux Smith—was a B-Queen icon. I saw her in a lot of movies. More recently, I caught her softcore version of *CINDERELLA* on late-night cable. Not long after that movie, she just disappeared. Whatever happened to her?"

How did an actress, who formerly earned the adulation of drive-in addicts everywhere, suddenly slip into anonymity?

CHAPTER ONE
"I believe the first film Cheryl ever did was *THE LEGENDARY CURSE OF LEMORA* (1974)," recalled Eric Caidin, owner of the Hollywood Book and Poster Memorabilia shop. "It was a

CARNIVAL OF SOULS-type of movie. Her character was only 13 or so, but she made a very big impression on me after seeing that film."

It turns out that Rainbeaux's first speaking role

was a bit in *EVEL KNIEVEL* (1972). But, as *THE LEGENDARY CURSE OF LEMORA*'s leading lady, her visibility increased to

Smith played "LE" in *THE LEGENDARY CURSE OF LEMORA*. Initially repulsed (below) by an alternate lifestyle, she is persuaded by Lemora (Leslie Gill, right) to become one of "them" (left).





Top left: Smith and her *CAGED HEAT* colleagues. "I realized how many prison films have been made since," said Smith about the 1974 release, "and feel extremely fortunate to be in the original."

most of the film's running time. Alternately titled *LEMORA*, *THE LADY DRACULA* and *LEMORA, A CHILD'S TALE OF THE SUPERNATURAL*, it's an underrated movie about lost innocence. Rainbeaux played Lila, a naive adolescent who is seduced by Lemora into an alternate lifestyle (vampirism). Allegorically, the subtext involves a teenager struggling with the fear of her own sexuality (a theme reprised in another grim fairy tale, 1984's *COMPANY OF WOLVES*); sexually harassed by men, including a minister, Lila finds comfort in her relationship with Lemora.

Cast as a 13-year-old "Singing Angel of the South," Rainbeaux recalled in a 1986 interview that "[Richard Blackburn] want-

ed me to cut my inch-long nails for the role and for me to shave my bod. Didn't even have a hair under the arm. He chased me, one day, all over and around the set—several times—with scissors in his hand, trying to cut my hair. It was a riot."

Blackburn, *LEMORA*'s writer/director, couldn't recall the circumstances that prompted Rainbeaux's casting. "I guess she came through some agency," he said. "She had this dog, a huge Great Dane. She was basically a street waif, a Sunset Strip street waif. This was around 1972."

"I was trying to explain the character to her. I told her, 'You're a ward of the church, you're a very innocent little girl. Now you leave that and all these people are coming on to you.

This is a completely new world to you.' And she said, 'You mean like if a guy would flash a \$50 bill at me from a Caddie?' I said, 'Yeah, something like that.'"

"In the contract we had with her, it stipulated that she had to live at my parents' house and get straight, because she was taking so many chemicals it was unbelievable. As a matter of fact, she had some sort of condition and was on painkillers. But, back in those days, people would just take the damndest things. I mean, she was fucking high."

"There was one scene in the movie where she was just loaded out of her mind. It freaked me out because she could have killed herself. I had no idea she had taken whatever it was she took, but it was obvious that

she was high."

CHAPTER II

After *LEMORA*, there were films like *THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS*, *CAGED HEAT*, *VIDEO VIXENS*, *MASSACRE AT CENTRAL HIGH*, *REVENGE OF THE CHEERLEADERS*, *THE POM POM GIRLS*, *DRUM*, *THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN*, *SUMMER PARTY '37*—

And *CINDERELLA*. "An adult fairy tale with buttons undone," blared the British ads. Photos of Rainbeaux, as the fairy tale princess, illustrated Australian matchbooks that tied-in with the 1977 movie. Rainbeaux competed with "tons of females, crowded in this little office," for the title role. "*CINDERELLA* was a sassy musical comedy directed by Michael

"She was just a Sunset Strip gal. I don't think she was at all embarrassed about it. I almost had to restrain her."



Smith left asleep during the cattle call for *CINDERELLA* (top and left). "They were joking about how embarrassed I was."



You will see ALL of Cinderella and the other 44 girls when you see the film.

An *Entertainment* magazine



Ptak, an amazingly great actor himself," she related to Bill George in 1986. "He got me to do things most directors couldn't. Seeing so much of his earlier work, I had much respect and trusted him all the way. It's he, who, when casting, said, 'She's the one...Cinders.'"

"At first, I was leery about doing a film with so much nudity. I did need work and felt I needed a leading role. After reading the script, I realized if it were to be an X, it would probably be the softest ever made. I found the script very funny and light as a feather. So when I landed it, I rode it through. I enjoyed working for my friends, the Bands (Charles and Albert). I worked for them, again,

starring in *LASERBLAST* and [appearing in] *PARASITE*."

Previously cast in nymphet and cheerleader roles, Rainbeaux—who also served as a *Playboy* model—had already acclimated herself to "disrobement" obligations. Richard Blackburn recalled there was no problem persuading her to perform discreet nudity in *LEMORA*. "In fact, it was just the opposite," recounted Blackburn. "There isn't that much nudity in the movie because I didn't want there to be. I just wanted suggestions and flashes of it. And Cheryl, at that time, was pretty well endowed for what she was supposed to play. I mean, here she was at 17, playing someone who was 13. So we couldn't have shown her breasts, because it wouldn't have worked for how young the character was supposed to be. There's a scene where she's nude, except I didn't show it. But she didn't care. She was just a Sunset Strip gal. I don't think she was at all embarrassed about it. I almost had to restrain her."

"She is not, in any way, a really accomplished actress.

What she does have—and certainly did have then—is a Botticelli angel quality. She'd seen some pretty weird scenes, but you'd never know it by looking at her. She looked like the picture of innocence."

Jonathan Demme, Rainbeaux's *CAGED HEAT* director, recalled her presence and professionalism. Demme, who earned 1992's Best Director Oscar for *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*, told *Female Fatales* that "Rainbeaux had everything it took to star in a New World Pictures production—youth, a great appearance and the ability to say lines of dialogue. Plus, she had real talent and was an intriguing young woman."

PART III:

Walt Lee, editor of *The Reference Guide to Fantastic Films*, had developed a rapport with Rainbeaux. At one time, he even contemplated a photo book devoted to the actress. "She had leading roles in about 12 movies," Lee said. "She worked for some of the best directors in Hollywood. She had significant roles in several dozen films. You'd think that now,

still only in her late '30s, she'd be well-to-do. But you'd be wrong. She wasn't paid for some of these movies, and she spent what she made on the others."

One of her plum assignments was a supporting role in an A-movie, *FAREWELL, MY LOVELY* (1976). "My gangster boyfriend who saves my life in the picture, was Sylvester Stallone," wrote Rainbeaux in a letter to Bill George. "What a sweetheart of a gentleman he was. Always positive and driven toward his future glory. I always felt the two of us would make it. He was terrific."

Asked to cite a favorite film from her body of work, Rainbeaux selected *CAGED HEAT*. "With some of the logos made to sell the film, like 'White Hot Desires Melt Cold Prison Steel,' you might first think it exploited everything under the sun. However, it does take a hard and serious look into the inhumane, man-like life of inmates more than likely to be lacked up somewhere in the Midwest. It's one of those films that was filmed in Anywhere, U.S.A."

In 1989, Rainbeaux

REVENGE OF THE CHEERLEADERS is Smith's "absolute favorite of its kind. Actually, the other ones I'd personally like to forget."





"My CAISSED HEAT dressing room was my very own cell," recalled Smith. "It wasn't easy making a real jail prisoner."

granted an interview with writer Kris Gilpin. The profile was optimistically titled "The Return of Rainbeau." No such luck. She had not made a screen appearance in seven years, and a comeback wasn't in her future.

Rainbeau to Gilpin: "I wanted to be an archaeologist, but majored in the arts. Drawing and painting, music and dance. My mother, Jayne, was a ballet teacher and she performed the Orpheum Circuit during Vaudeville."

What was the significance behind the Rainbeau sobriquet? "I like what it symbolized, and I dress very colorfully. But I use the name Cheryl."

A couple of years ago, during a Hollywood trip, filmmaker Donald Farmer (VAMPIRE COP) tried to visit the house that was oc-

cupied by Rainbeau and her mother. He was greeted at the door by Rainbeau's mother but denied entrance. Farmer got enough of a peek inside the door to see paintings of Rainbeau all over the place.

"The last time I saw her," recalled Richard Blackburn, "she was with this older guy. This was about six years ago, at Donald Reed's horror film society. She sounded like she had drunk an entire case of Jim Beam. Her voice was down to her ankles it was so low."

"I think what happened to Rainbeau is the classic example of burnout," opined Eric Caidin. "She went through pretty much what everybody went through in the late '60s, but it seemed to have more of an effect on her than others. Some people get out of it. Some people

don't."

Filmmaker Larry Greenberg (BIMBO PENITENTARY) was initially thrilled to meet the actress in 1985. "It didn't matter if Cheryl Rainbeau Smith was playing virginal heroines or rebels," said Greenberg. "Rainbeau expressed herself through sex, and she was damn good at it. But, as I spoke to her, I realized the real-life Rainbeau was now a troubled, out-of-work single mother. As we spoke, she openly drank out of a silver flask while rambling about her career."

In contrast, Jonathan Demme's recollections are all the more frustrating because he knew the Rainbeau who should have survived the '70s. "Rainbeau's acting abilities arose from her excellent

instinctive responses to situations, more than from formalized training," said Demme. "I remember her as a good person, and reliable to work with. Rainbeau played a small part in MELVIN AND HOWARD, as a mom sharing a room in a maternity ward with Mary Steenburgen. I would have liked to work with her again. I often wonder what has become of Rainbeau."

We may never know. Attempts to reach Cheryl Rainbeau Smith proved futile.

POSTSCRIPT

April 27, 1993: I called the editor, alerting him that the Rainbeau profile was completed and on the way.

Composing the feedback seemed, at times, uncon-

fortably like writing a eulogy. Wait Lee and Eric Caidin, both still in touch with Rainbeaux, informed the actress I was desperate to converse with her. But reaching out to Rainbeaux was like a disappointing seance...the other side doesn't answer.

The following day I got a phone call:

"This is Cheryl Smith," Rainbeaux. The voice was husky but retained that familiar nymphet inflection.

"I'm sorry I took so long to get back to you," she explained. "I've been trying to get my life together for the past few years."

Rainbeaux vowed she'd be prepared to do an interview sometime during the next 24 hours. But, instead, she did her vanishing act for the next few days. Thinking I lost her, I frantically called Lee, Caidin and Rainbeaux's mother in an effort to trace the elusive actress. Rainbeaux finally called the following Friday night.

"Sorry I couldn't have called you earlier," she said. "I had to go to the welfare office."

Recalling her genesis as a screen actress, Rainbeaux revealed her very first movie was a short titled *THE BIRTH OF APHRODITE*. "It was an independent film," she explained. "When they showed the trailer with a Clint Eastwood western, that was the first time I saw myself on screen. The trailer played the Rolling Stones' 'She's Like a Rainbow.' And when the picture came on, it was me coming out of the ocean, covered with seaweed. I didn't know it at the time, but *APHRODITE* had won at the Atlanta Film Festival. They had edited all the winners together into a feature film called *THRESHOLD NINE ILLUSIONS*, which I never saw."

Few of Rainbeaux's fans realize she jammed with a young Joan Jett. "We did a

JONATHAN DEMME

"I remember her as a good person, and reliable to work with...I often wondered what has become of Rainbeaux."



SMITH IN *SWIM* (1966), a sequel to *MANDINGO*. She occasionally modeled (above), posing for 1972-73 *Playboy* assignments.

film together called *WE'RE ALL CRAZY NOW*. They changed the title to *DUB-ET-E-O*. I don't know what the hell that means! They put Ray Sharkey in it. We almost lost that film in the editing room. One of the editors was an alcoholic and he got really pissed off, and threw the movieola through a thick plate of glass in the editing room. We ended up

owing the editing room so much money that they wouldn't take the picture. I don't know what happened to that film. They showed it at the *FILMEX*, but I've never seen the finished thing."

When reminded of *MAS-SACRE* at *CENTRAL HIGH*, regarded by some as the best of her cult classics, Rainbeaux winces. "Ugh,"

she said. "No, that's not my best film. I mean, basically, it's 12 pointless murders. There's not one adult in the film, if you notice. It's just kids. Brad Davis, who's not alive anymore, did the best he could with something so ridiculous. I primarily did it because I needed some work, and Bobby Carradine was an old friend." In addition to *CENTRAL HIGH*, Rainbeaux and Carradine also appeared in *THE POM POM GIRLS*, both films were released in 1976.

Her favorite director is Jonathan Demme. "On *CAGED HEAT*, he was just fabulous!" Rainbeaux exclaimed. "I was young, we did that in '73. Of course, I was still living with my parents. In most of my movies, I furnished my own clothes, because I had a lot of clothes from the turn of the century. But Jonathan Demme and his wife Evelyn Purcell came over to my parents' and we were flabbergasted. They chose some clothes from my room. It was so nice having them over."

"It was easy to follow his directions, because he was very precise and decisive. He's the best. I've worked with a lot of directors and he's by far my favorite. I'd like to work with him again."

Other Recollections

A familiar player in the "cheerleader" subgenre (*THE POM POM GIRLS*, *THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS*), Rainbeaux cites *REVENGE OF THE CHEERLEADERS* (1976) as her favorite. During production she was pregnant with her son, "who has just turned 18. His name is Justin. Justin Sterling. He's a good kid, trying to get into a music career. He's doing a lot of deejaying and is off to a good start, I hope."

SLUMBER PARTY '67 (1976): "That was Debra Winger's first film. I don't think she puts it on her resume. There are some personal things I could tell, but I wouldn't want them to be published. She'd probably



Smith, second from left, and starlet Debra Winger, foreground, celebrated SLIMMER PARTY '87 (1987).

come after me with a butcher knife. She was very...um ... determined to become an actress. Most people in that movie had never done anything before, but she had training. She'd work with me, run lines with me. In that way she was really sweet. Everyone I've ever worked with, who was any good, has gotten to the top. I've just had a lot of personal and medical problems that I've had to take care of. I never planned on being away from my career as long as I have."

In recent years, Rainbeaux has been involved in music and painting. But even those creative endeavors

had to be put on hold last year. "I was hospitalized for most of last year," said Rainbeaux. "I had an infection in my foot and almost had to have it amputated. But, I'm basically okay now."

Probing once more into her past, I asked Rainbeaux to comment on Richard Blackburn's retrospective. First, was she on drugs while shooting THE LEGENDARY CURSE OF LEMORA? "Absolutely not!" Rainbeaux protested. "I was only 15 years old. Not 17. I didn't even know what drugs were."

"I'll tell you a funny story about that film. Toward the end of the movie, I had to

bite Richard on the neck. When I did that, he got a hard-on. Here I am, this 15-year-old girl, and he gets a hard-on. The whole crew noticed, and they thought it was pretty funny."

"He expected a lot from me. I never got paid for rehearsing. He'd want me to come and rehearse for a week at his apartment, at all kinds of crazy hours. He would act like a general, you know, and make demands of me. I did the best I could, that's all I could do. But we really didn't get along too well."

Regarding her private life, Rainbeaux restricts her comments to some positive speculation. "I'm having a few problems that I hope to have resolved by the middle of this year. I'm hoping to get my own place, get an



Filmmaker Ruth Kawahara noted, "Smith's nature. In *Stone the Massacre at Central High*, made her a vulnerable target."

agent and I would like to get back into working again."

She concluded by saying, "One of my biggest goals is to work with Jonathan Demme again."

And that was that. She now only refers to herself as Cheryl. I remind her that admirers still fondly address her as Rainbeaux. But the former drive-in queen is surprised the public still remembers her at all. Wistfully, she promised to speak to me again.

If she can iron out her problems, perhaps Rainbeaux will achieve her goals, including a reunion with Demme. And maybe, on a more personal level, she'll get her life back together again.

Somewhere over the rainbow, dreams come true. □



Smith starred as one of THE SWINGING CHEERLEADERS (1974), which served as the film debut of Curleen Camp.



BOMBHELL THE BLOOM



A > A



**FROM SCIENCE
FICTION SEXPOT
TO SHOOT-'EM-UP
STAR... VERSATILE
AVA CADELL
MEASURES UP!**

By Ari Blass

She has graced magazine covers the world over, appeared in dozens of films, television shows and commercials, and written books, scripts and columns for publications world wide. Are there any worlds left for the former 'Page 3' girl and restaurateur to conquer? "Well, Joe Bob Briggs recently voted me the 'Best Great Actress of the Year,'" Ava Cadell says, in her impossibly sweet voice.

"I've flattered when anybody wants to see my body in a bikini. It's a little embarrassing...but...we should shoot it!"



THOMSON
BBS
ONLINE

FROM SCIENCE
FICTION SETTOP
TO SHOOT-EM-UP
STAR, VERSATILE
ANA CADILL
MEASURES UP

Table 1

The two general responses are one of a world-wide appreciation of the artist's achievement, and one of more reserved, and sometimes hostile, responses and criticism for political or social reasons. And there are wonderful things the new Page is going to achieve that he cannot? Which, like the H-bomb, is one life in billions, is a great human achievement of the 20th century (which) says to his contemporaries (which) is not so.

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.





"The reason I wanted to go to drama school was because I was very shy..."

Ava Cadell was born Illdiko Csarh in Budapest, during the Hungarian Revolution. While still an infant, strangers smuggled her into Austria, where she was raised in an orphanage. Ava's grandmother eventually caught up with her and took Ava to London when she was seven. "The first thing I did was learn English, and I had an accent like Zsa Zsa Gabor."

Cadell succinctly recounts the story of her childhood. "My granny worked as a servant, and I worked as a maid and a cook, so that we would have some place to live. We were very poor. I never really wanted to be an actress, actually. The reason I wanted to go to drama school was because I was very shy and I wanted to get rid of that hideous accent." Unable to afford the tuition, Cadell began modeling to pay her way. She soon found herself in great demand, as her beautiful face and figure began gracing ads all across Europe. "There was a three-year course at the Birmingham School of Speech Training and Dramatic Arts, and I did two years. I started to enjoy it and I found that it was a way of gaining acceptance."

As with many British models, the move to film work was a natural progression, but unlike most, Cadell soon garnered great notices. "I did a lot of commercials, and then from there I was given small roles, and then the roles got bigger. I did everything from sexy roles to Shakespeare. One week I'd work for the BBC, and the next week I'd do something really silly like *CONFESSIONS OF A WINDOW CLEANER*."

"The very first film I did in England was called *OUTER TOUCH*. I was seventeen when I made it. It was a silly, silly movie about three space women who came to Earth and had never seen a man before." The film eventually saw limited release in the U.S. in 1979 and went nowhere. In 1981, Miramax bought the film

"The tabloids in London were really nasty to me... They portrayed me as a Madonna-type person who was just a sex fiend."



"My favorite line in *MASTER DEMON* is when this demon asks me if I'm still a virgin...I reply, 'You've got to be kidding'."

and "Americanized" it by hiring young comic Bob Saget to write new, sarcastic dialogues for the ship's computer and do its voice. The film was rereleased in time for the 1981 Christmas season under the title *SPACED OUT*. Cadell recalls, "Miramax wanted me to do some more scenes for the movie when they bought it, because it needed some extra nudity, but I didn't like the movie very much, so I didn't do it. But, I still have some clippings of interviews of Bob Saget and me when we went on the road to promote it in Chicago."

"In England," said Cadell, "a lot of people won't even consider you for a role unless you've had drama school training. Many times they were actually turned

off by the fact I was a model, while in America it's an advantage." Nevertheless, she made approximately 30 films in Britain.

"I started doing pretty well in London," remembers Cadell. "I had a cosmetics contract, and I was doing a lot of covers and magazines and some acting. I had been cooking since I was seven, when my granny taught me, and I was a terrific cook by the time I was 12. So, I decided to invest my money in a restaurant in Soho called Du Rollo, and it did very well." Unfortunately, Cadell soon learned the perils of being in the public eye.

"The tabloids in London were really nasty to me. I don't know why, but they always wrote up wild and exaggerated stories making me out to be some vixen.

They portrayed me as a Madonna-type person who was just a sex fiend. I used to be a 'Page 3' girl when I was younger and I did all the things that British models and actresses do, and they tried to cause bad publicity so that I would lose my cosmetics contract. They tried it all the time, but it just got me more work. The British press can be very vicious because they don't have the lawsuits that they have in America."

In 1980, Cadell decided to sail Du Rollo and open a restaurant in America. "I went to Miami and opened up a dinner theater and restaurant in Coral Gables. I struggled with it for about two or three years. It was a horrendous business experience, and I lost all my money. I was conned. Things should have gone really well—I even had a local cooking show down there. But the construction people said that my restaurant would be ready in three months, and it took about a year and three months. It was a disaster." Cadell then tried to do some acting and modeling while struggling with the restaurant. "I modeled quite regularly because I had that kind of South American look. I did a lot of commercials for South and Central America." While in Florida, a blonde-haired Cadell also got a part in *SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT III*. "But," Cadell concedes, "I had a bad taste from all the business problems I'd had. After I lost everything I came to Hollywood."

When she arrived in Hollywood, Cadell sought theater work, and found it in a musical called *Cabaret Dada*. "I got an agent from that named David Wilder. Very shortly after that, he got me a role in *JUNGLE WAR-RIORS*, with Sybil Danning. We shot it down in Mexico."

Cadell considers it her worst film experience. "It was a shoot-on-up movie, in the jungle, and it was really hard work. We had to go through swamps with crocodiles and bugs, and it was

pretty icky. The girls were all freaking out. Then, I got salmonella from dirty food and I was violently ill for about a week. It was a crazy month of filming."

The whole production had been plagued with problems. Shot in the spring of 1983, **JUNGLE WARRIORS** co-starred Sybil Danning, John Vernon, Woody Strode and Marjor Gortner. The original director, Billy Fine, dropped out during pre-production. Dennis Hopper, who had originally been cast in a supporting role, was sent home after arriving in Mexico drunk, stripping off all his clothes and running amok in the mountain resort of Cuernavaca. He was eventually found in the custody of local police 20 miles away. Director Ernest Von Theumer (**CHAINED HEAT**) had Hopper flown back to the states immediately, though Hopper reportedly tried to open the plane's emergency exit during take-off.

"In **NOT OF THIS EARTH**, I play a hooker with the U.G. of a jellyfish. You have to be smart to play that!"



"I just hated **JUNGLE WARRIORS**. One day I said to Sybil [Danning], 'You know, maybe less screen time is better in this movie.'"

"It wasn't a fun production to work on," Cadell says. "There was one girl who kept pushing everyone out of the way to get more screen time. One day I said to Sybil, 'You know, maybe less screen time is better in this movie.' I just hated that movie. The rape scene was just horrendous. I was screaming for real." Fortunately for all concerned, the film died a quick death after its Christmas 1984 release.

"After I got back from Mexico, I started doing a lot of TV shows. I know you featured an article on Dona Sper in a recent *Person* *Fotofest* (1:4). At that time Dona was with David Widder as well, and we were very good friends. Dona and I used to go up for TV shows together because we have similar bodies, and she would be the blonde and I'd be the brunette. We did a lot of shows together, like **MIKE HAMMER** and **MATT HOUSTON**."

After much television work, Cadell was cast in John Landis' cameo-laden **INTO THE NIGHT** (1985). "Landis sent me a really nice letter saying what a nice job I did, and apologizing for having to cut it because the movie was too long. I played the owner of a night club. I had on a beautiful red dress and I was sucking strawberries while Jeff Goldblum came in. John Landis, who is an excellent director, is kind of hyper. He said to me, 'Ava, if you fuck up I'll kill you, if you don't, I'll give you the dress you're wearing, and the shoes.' So I did it in one take, and I got the dress and the shoes. I like the challenge of working under pressure."

More television roles fol-

lowed, including **HOTEL** and **LOVE BOAT**, and Cadell won a part in Arnold Schwarzenegger's **COM-MANDO**. "My role in started out bigger, but it was cut down," Cadell recalled. Her part is virtually nonexistent in television airings of the film; in the theatrical version of the scene, a topless Cadell squirms when Schwarzenegger smashes a bad guy through her motel room door. "Arnold was very, very charming. We talked quite a bit because he's Austrian, and he said that he helped his father save a lot of the Hungarian refugees at the time of the revolution. I was pretty shy on the set, and he was so nice."

In 1987, Cadell auditioned for Jim Wynorski, who was casting his remake of Roger Corman's classic **NOT OF THIS EARTH**. "Jim Wynorski did the casting himself, which is unusual. I went to see him, and I look fairly sophisticated, and had this slightly proper English accent, and when he met me he really wanted me to play this sleazy, sleazy New York hooker. He said he loves to put people in characters that are the opposite of who they are, and I thought that was fun too. I played 'Hooker #2,' and I used Edward G. Robinson's accent. He said to me, 'Ava, you're a hooker with the brain of a jellyfish,' and I said, 'OK.'"

"I used to have my own show on the Playboy channel called **PILLOW PRE-VIEWS**, which I got after doing a show years ago with Alan Thicke called **THICKE OF THE NIGHT**. The people from Playboy saw it and offered me my own talk show where I would inter-

view adult film stars and review their movies comedically, like *Elvira*. I got a lot of fan mail through that, including a letter from a Hungarian man who runs the Beverly Hills Karate Academy. He asked if I would be interested in being trained in the martial arts, and I went for it."

Cadell considers her martial arts skills an advantage over other female performers. "There's not much competition, as far as actresses who also do martial arts. People in the martial arts recommend each other for work, and that's how I met Eric Lee and got the part in **MASTER DEMON**, which has not yet been distributed."

Frequent viewers of the USA Network will no doubt fondly recall Cadell's coming of age comedy, **LUNCH BOX**. "I have the lead, a sexy businesswoman who likes young, teenage boys. I got to seduce a young boy, and that's always fun. It was done directly for video, and it plays all the time on





"Many times, [British producers] were actually turned off by the fact that I was a model, while in America it's an advantage."

cable."

LUNCH BOX's director, Bill Burke, sings Cadell's praises: "The script was very sketchy, and we had very short rehearsal time, but she was really helpful in fleshing out the script. She was a delight to work with, plus when the dailies came in I realized there was nothing you could do to make her look wrong on camera."

Burke also remembers Cadell causing a bit of a stir on the set: "Ava did one

scene in a very interesting night gown, and that was the first time that the Fire Marshal insisted on being in the room where the scene was being shot. He could not be removed under any circumstances."

Many of Cadell's fans know her from the most recent entries in Andy Sidaris' action/exploitation series. "I met Andy through my husband, who is a top criminal attorney out here in L.A.—not that Andy is a crimi-

nal—but Andy uses my husband's house in Malibu sometimes as one of his 'Hawaiian' locations, because it's less expensive to shoot there. I was at the house once when they were shooting—I think they were shooting GUNS—and they gave me a small role in DO OR DIE and see how I did." Actually, Sidaris and Cadell's husband Peter Knocht go way back: "My husband used to be an actor, and he played a bad guy in Andy's movie SEVEN."

Sidaris was pleased with Cadell's work in DO OR DIE, where she played a hitwoman, so he gave her a bigger role in his next, and last, two films of the series: HARD HUNTED and FIT TO KILL. "I get to do a little karate in FIT TO KILL, and I also have a very sexy scene, of which Andy sent some pictures to Playboy, where a Russian makes love to me while I'm on the air."

"Andy showed me a copy of the new issue of *Femme*

Fotoles with the photo of me as a blonde. [FF 1:4] It was a poster I did a several years ago. I was blonde for about a year, but I'm back to brunette now. Blondes may not have more fun, but they get more poster shoots." Unfortunately for Ava, a prior commitment—compiling a combination calendar and directory called *The Little Red Book: The Complete Guide For Sexy People* with fellow B-movie actress Jane Hamilton—forced her to turn down a recurring role in Drew Sidaris' new series of films. "They just finished the first picture in Louisiana. They had written a role for me, called Ava, sort of the part Tony Peck had been doing—the agent in charge of everyone."

Cadell's acquiescence to do nude scenes has made action/exploitation roles more accessible; unveiling her physical charms, however, has sometimes prompted executives to stereotype or dismiss the actress. "I don't have a problem with nudity,

continued on page 60

"In LUNCHBOX, I'm a business woman who seduces young men. I could do this with my eyes closed."



SACRED PREY

VIVIAN SCHILLING TURNS TO VODOO, TRANSFORMING AN UNPRODUCED MOVIE INTO A NOVEL.

By BRINKE STEVENS

Vivian Schilling, the Saturn award-winning actress/producer/screenwriter, should already be a familiar name to *Femme Fatales* readers (FF 1-3). Recently, I was asked to review her debut novel, *Sacred Prey*. The verdict: although it undoubtedly sounds trite to appraise it as "I couldn't put-it-down" reading, that's quite honestly the truth here.

The book spins a supernatural yarn about murder, voodoo and soul-switching in New Orleans. The main character, Adam Claiborne, is a wealthy but cold-hearted man who loans money to needy people. His cocaine-addicted younger brother, Kyle, acts as his brutal collection agent. Unbeknownst to Adam, Kyle has been extorting money from their beleaguered victims to feed his growing drug habit.

Meantime, a dirt-poor couple, Monique and Charlie Sinclair, have borrowed money from Adam to finance their baby's medical treatments. Although they do fully pay back their \$5000 loan, Kyle deviously lies to his brother and claims they've only paid off a small portion. The vengeful Adam hunts down and murders the hapless couple in a Louisiana swamp. He also steals their infant daughter to later sell in a black market adoption deal. In dire need of medical aid, the helpless baby dies soon afterward.

Adam, a "good" Catholic, seeks forgiveness from the local parish. To his surprise, a more lenient priest has been replaced by a tougher clergyman who refuses to grant him absolution for his sins. The replacement priest reprimands Adam for not yet feeling



Brinke Stevens interviewed Vivian Schilling at the American Film Market (March 2, 1993)

enough remorse, further suggesting he must first learn a valuable "lesson" before he can be fully pardoned in the eyes of God.

Adam later awakens to find himself laying beside the beautiful Monique. He discovers that his soul has been transferred to Charlie Sinclair's body. Adam also realizes he has been whisked back in time; he's inhabiting Charlie's human shell only three days before his own ruthless execution of both Sinclairs.

Though Adam-as-Charlie tries to prevent the impending fate, the inexorable sequence of events continues to play out exactly as it did before. Adam/Charlie clearly senses not only his own doom, but also his adopted family's. He slowly gains insight into the pitiful lives of his victims and into the heinous lies of his brother Kyle. When the final showdown again occurs in the dismal swamp, Adam is now a radically changed man who can experience an entirely new perspective of

life and death.

It is partially Adam's own transformation that keeps the reader spellbound. With intricate complexity, Schilling weaves the despicable personality of Adam into his new persona as the victimized Charlie. Schilling's success as a storyteller is also communicated in her evocative descriptions: "The grey gargoyles carved out of the cathedral's sides seemed strangely out of place against the bright day. They hunched menacingly on their hind quarters with their clawed feet poised to strike, frozen in motion as if waiting for the night to release them from the rock..."

I managed to catch up with Schilling at L.A.'s American Film Market. The youthful author noted that *Sacred Prey* was originally tailored as a movie script for Hemdale. After the company's financial collapse, Schilling embarked on an arduous, six-month task of adapting her screenplay into a novel. "I didn't know what to do next," she admitted, "and I wanted to do something that was within my control. I'd always longed to write a novel. So I thought, 'Why not now?' I was futilely trying to come up with a unique story line, when I suddenly realized I already had several unproduced scripts at my disposal."

Schilling intended to play Monique Sinclair in the film version; however, as the novel took shape, she found it more difficult to relate to her own character on paper. "It's very tough to describe yourself," Schilling explained. "So I deliberately tried to make her a slightly different person. I gave her blonde hair in the novel, instead of my own red hair, so I could more easily pin her down. We both come from a similar lower-class background, where money was always an issue. But she's certainly more street-wise than I could ever be, myself."



Researching her novel, Schilling checked into a New Orleans hotel for several weeks. Eschewing the well-trodden tourist routes, she took off on foot to the seamiest quarters and even booked her own host to investigate the outlying swamps. "New Orleans is such a provocative city, so alive!" sighed Schilling. "It's very easy to use it as a setting, because it gives you so much. But I have to fight the urge to set another story there I've often thought of going back to visit, however. My characters became so real to me that it now feels as if I've got 'family' there."

A particularly fascinating aspect of *Sacred Prey* is the omnipresent voodoo element, interwoven with traditional Catholicism. Accordingly, I was never sure exactly how Adam's soul was transferred into Charlie's body, and it's never clearly explained to the reader. Schilling, herself, admits she had a problem with the mystical premise. "When I arrived in New Orleans," she explained, "my existing plot was somewhat different. The main catalyst was simply voodoo. Once there, however, I found out voodoo was something completely different from what I'd expected. I didn't want to perpetuate that off-base Hollywood myth, so that's why I ultimately changed my story. Regarding Adam's soul transference, it was far easier when I could say, 'It was voodoo!' Whatever the force was, it wasn't Catholicism either. In my mind, that replacement priest was never real. He was just there because Adam needed him. Adam had it within himself to change, and he alone brought it upon himself."

Schilling's initial encounter with voodoo, in the "streamy, sultry" New Orleans environment, proved a memorable experience. "I'd arranged to interview a priestess, which gave me chills just to think about it. I went in expecting something very scary. She was at the Museum of Voodoo, a tiny



Schilling (going for *IN A MOMENT OF PASSION*) has learned that *SACRED PREY* will be awarded this year's Golden Scroll.

bouse with alligator heads—and all sorts of other strange things—hanging on the walls and stuffed in plastic jars. Suddenly, I heard a strange noise... and I realized there was a huge boa constrictor in the corner. I broke out in a sweat and practically belted for the front door! So I made the priestess do our interview by the door, so I could get out fast if I had to!"

This personal adventure was interpolated into the novel. In a relevant scene, Adam (as Charlie) and Monique pay a visit to Madame Peggy at the House of Voodoo. "The pungent scent of incense rushed through Adam's nostrils and mouth, scratching his throat with every breath he inhaled... An oil painting of the famous Marie Laveau hung above a mantle, beneath a stack of alligator and snake

heads... Just then, Adam saw a large snake slither out of the other room and curl behind the counter."

Now that Schilling's first novel is prepared for publication, I asked her to define the difference between a book author and screenwriter. "The one thing I absolutely loved about writing a novel," she told me, "is that you are a director yourself. You are in complete control over the sights, the smells, the thoughts of your characters... everything! That was very exciting to me, to be able to paint the whole picture. In a script, you can only hint at these details, since it eventually boils down to available locations and the director's choices."

And what's next for Schilling? "I'm considering transforming a nother script of mine, *BLACK CREEK*, into a novel," she grinned. "It's a straight thriller that takes place in Texas, so it's a new location for me to explore. It should be a fun one! You know, they say your first novel is mostly for creating an awareness of your work, so my next novel will already have a foundation. And, hopefully, it'll be easier to sell. I wouldn't mind doing some book-

store tours!"

WIN AUTOGRAPHED "SACRED PREY"

Win a hardcover copy of Vivian Schilling's new novel, personally autographed by the author. Fifty copies will be given away to current subscribers. Just send in your name and address on a postcard requesting the book. If your subscription has lapsed with this or an earlier issue, send in your request with a renewal. The first fifty requests received will get the free autographed books. In addition, fifty copies will be given away to new subscribers. Just use the coupon or toll free number listed on page 62, and ask for the book. The first fifty subscribers who ask will get the free autographed copies. It's that simple.

MORE THAN A

Heavenly Body

FRANCIS PRAKSTI IS ONE SCIENCE FICTION SIREN WHO'S SHOWING STRENGTH.

BY MARK A. ALTMAN



The location, a large L.A. warehouse several miles north of Laurel Canyon. Frances Praksti, seated on a worn-out sofa, wears a tight black turtleneck that hugs her curvaceous figure. Fondling her prop laser gun, she grabs a quick glass of water while waiting to be recalled to the adjacent stage.

The twentysomething Praksti, a strikingly beautiful Eurasian woman, is shooting a TV pilot titled *STAR RUNNERS*. Based on "Fusion," a cancelled Image Comics black and white monthly, the pilot is the brainchild of producer Lex Nakashima. Formerly the editor of "Fusion," Nakashima had long hoped to adapt his science fiction scenario—involving the crew of the *Yellow Rose*, an intergalactic earth vessel—to the small screen.

Praksti, making her television dramatic debut, shares something in common with the crew and supporting cast of *STAR RUNNERS*; they're creating a labor of love. Shot on a shoestring budget of \$200,000, the show's leased warehouse stores sets that have been assembled from junkyard debris and electronic graveyard bric-a-brac. "It sounded so perfect for me," explained Praksti, "I had just moved here from Hawaii and had

done plays and a lot of commercials, but never the lead in a television series. It's been wonderful. I love *STAR WARS* and *ALIENS* and *STAR TREK* and science fiction. It's perfect for me. Everything just fit right into place."

The casting breakdown, submitted to agents, requested a Eurasian actress—somewhere in the 21-30 year bracket—with an athletic physique and an ability to fight. But the producers hardly expected to discover the physical incarnation of Indio, "Fusion's comic book heroine. "It was great," exclaimed Praksti. "On my third callback, they



Probst, striking a pose on the Yellow Lines (opposite) is described by co-star Patricia Tullman as a "real find. She's beautiful and she's talented."



the opportunity to be able to go even more underground if we choose to."

The comic book had been conceptualized as the blueprint for a low-budget motion picture. "I grew up on bug-eyed monsters," smiles Nakashima. "We are the STAR WARS generation, in a sense. Here was a movie that didn't just have people dressed differently and talking weird. It was mushroom-beaded guys and it was a mind-blower. There hasn't been much of that since. There's been ALIENS and PREDATOR, but with STAR RUNNERS there aren't any walls."

Canine-like aliens are roaming freely across the set, along with a mechanically controlled, lion-beaded hero named Carz. The comic book storyline introduced new breeds of genetically uplifted life forms, which later surfaced as inhabitants of the STAR RUNNERS cosmos. "There are two types of aliens in this universe," said Nakashima. "The uplifted animals are essentially earth forms that were uplifted from what you

see around, lions, tigers, bears, wolves which were created for military purposes. It's basically electronics and genetics gone wild, as a result of the toy companies trying to create a talking dog that could actually have a brain and that evolved into military uses."

"I think you have to use a lot of imagination working on something like this, since its 500 years in the future," commented Praksti. "It's hard to imagine what it's going to be like then. I've never worked with 'suits' before. It was wonderful to see how that all worked out with the dogs and everybody. At first, when you turn to a person in a costume and he's not really speaking, it's hard getting used to it. You're waiting for him to speak, and you really have to use your imagination working with these creatures...and, hopefully, we pull it off realistically."

Probing her character's history, Praksti read the entire comic series prior to production. "I got a background where she comes from, how she became orphaned and how she got her own ship," recounted Praksti. "She's also a martial

Praksti inspects her STAR RUNNERS heroine in "perfect for me. I love STAR WARS, ALIEN, STAR TREK and science fiction."

and, 'If you want to go ahead and dress like Indie, and have something prepared, that's fine.' I went out and dug up four of the comic books at a store in Hollywood and researched her. I bought a jacket and tore it apart, and painted it so it looked like her jacket in the comic book, too. I did my hair just like her and the makeup. When I walked in, the producers said I looked like I had walked right out of the comic book."

Wyatt Weed, the show's co-director and co-producer, described the show as "almost the streetwise version of STAR WARS. It's a little snide and a little culty and a lot more radical. We're big fans of STAR TREK and DEEPSPACE NINE, and have a lot of respect for what they do, yet we have



FRANCIS PRAKSTI

"I have input. I added the knife that [Indio] wears... I have many things in common with the character."

artist. Luckily, I study martial arts. I got to use what I learned, and it was fun."

"I applaud Frances," said Monique Gabrielle (FF 1:2). "I tried out for a science fiction movie and the producers thought I looked too decorative, not the girl-next-door. There seems to be a Hollywood perception that a science fiction heroine can't look feminine and be intelligent. Look at Sigourney Weaver in ALIENS 3, they stripped-off her hair to make her more androgynous. I'm glad Frances is among the few exceptions. Her character, Indio, is not only attractive but a fighter. She's the rebirth of women, from a past generation of science fiction movies, who had only three obligations: fill out a tight sweater, scream and get rescued by the male hero. Not that everything is perfect in this 'year of the women; maybe there would be less stereotypical female characters in science fiction films, if there were more female science fictions writers."

As she returns to the stage, costumers assist Praksti with the constrictive body armor created by production designers Ted Van Doorn and Ted Smith. Van Doorn laughs, recalling that the mold of the breastplates, which fits firmly over Praksti's chest, were constructed to approximate the measurements of homely BAYWATCH star, Erika Eleniak.

Finally sealed in her armor, Praksti snaps back to her professional obligation; making the galaxy safe for humanity. Wiping away some perspiration, Praksti adds she has embellished the producers' concept of her character. "I have input," she adds "I added the

knife that she wears, and we have a lot of discussion about Indio. I have a lot in common with the character so it was very easy for me."

POSTSCRIPT

After completion of the STAR RUNNERS pilot, Praksti further expanded her on-fil credits. Cast in the "Storyteller" episode of DEEP SPACE NINE, Praksti noted the show's \$2 million sets were a long stretch from the budget limitations imposed upon the STAR RUNNERS TV pilot. "It was a while before I could take it all in," she exclaimed "The place was beautiful. There are so many people on the set that it felt like a completely different experience." In the "Storyteller" installment, Chief O'Brien (Colm Meaney) is rewarded by grateful Bajorans for saving their planet. His prize is Praksti, a "gift" that O'Brien declines (though, no doubt, it's an offer difficult to refuse). "For the audition, I had to literally give myself to the director, David Livingston," laughed the actress. "It was quite funny." While STAR RUNNERS makes the rounds of prospective syndicators, Praksti's association with science fiction has transferred to the big screen, look for her, later this year, in Sylvester Stallone's futuristic crime thriller THE DEMOLITION MAN. □

Frances Praksti photographed by Martin Martin. Makeup styling by Karen Ragozzine. Facility manager, Michael Williams. photo shoot produced and directed by Mark A. Altman. Special thanks to Lex Nakashima and Wyatt Weed. Shot on the stages of STAR RUNNERS.



Praksti plays Indio in STAR RUNNERS, a science fiction show that's almost the futuristic cousin of STAR WARS.

ACTING ON IMPULSE

CAST OF THE BLACK COMEDY THRILLER
IS A FEAST OF FEMME FATALES.

By BRINKE STEVENS

A vast multitude of B-movies have cast actresses—including yours truly—as Scream Queens. Apparently we've wielded enough influence to serve as the catalyst for an upcoming thriller; the heroine—you've guessed it—is a spirited Scream Queen!

Described by director Sam Irvin as a "who-dunnit with dark humor," **ACTING ON IMPULSE** straddles the vague line between B- and A-pictures by virtue of a low seven-figure budget and bankable stars: Nancy Allen



Linda Fiorentino does her *SARSARELLA* thing in a science fiction movie with a twist, *PLANET OF THE BASES*.

(**CARRIE, DRESSED TO KILL, ROBOCOP I-III**), Linda Fiorentino (**GOTCHA!, AFTER HOURS**), and C. Thomas Howell (**SOUL MAN**). Prime cable-TV slots may turn **ACTING ON IMPULSE** into a breakthrough movie, educating millions of Americans to our "Scream Queen" phenomenon.

Acquired by Spectator Films, the original screenplay—then titled **EYES OF A STRANGER**—matched a struggling actress, who's routinely cast in erotic thrillers, with a voyeuristic male stalker. There was little to distinguish the scenario from dozens of similar products. After several lackluster rewrites, Spectator brought aboard an imaginative producer, David Peters, with freelance writer Mark Pittman. While Pittman revised

the problematic script, Peters scouted for a director...

Enter Sam Irvin, who began working with Pittman to blend his own personality into the story. "Basically," explained Irvin, "I wanted to heighten certain things, and to bring in my signature dark humor to some of the characters."

Indeed, Irvin's brand of "dark humor" was prevalent in his directorial debut, **GUILTY AS CHARGED**. Perhaps best described as a tale of crime and punishment, **GUILTY** is laced with Grand Guignol imagery. Veteran actor Rod Steiger plays a pious meat-packer who hunts down pardoned murderers, and secretly executes them in his basement electric chair. A deft combination of political satire and Gothic horror, it stunned

even the most blasé critics.

Irvin applied his own subversive talent to the Spectator project, retitled **ACTING ON IMPULSE** (promoted in Europe as **ROSES ARE DEAD**). "When I first saw their script," he said, "the basic plot was already there. However, the main female character, Susan, was just a regular actress doing low-budget erotic thrillers—sort of the Sheryl Fenn type. But I thought, 'She has to be a very together woman in this story.' In my mind, she wasn't necessarily proud or happy about doing exploitation films, but she does have business savvy and good sense."

The director flashed on a brilliant idea: why not turn Susan into a bona fide Scream Queen? "I'd seen you and some of the others on **HARD COPY** and **ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT**," he told me. "I found out what a really happening thing this subgenre is. Prior to that, I wasn't totally aware of it, although I'd seen some of your films. But, once my attention was taught, I became completely fascinated!"

Irvin acknowledges the Susan character resembled all of us "Scream Queen" actresses in several key aspects. "In a way, you gals are like Madonna," he said, "because you've created a definite commercial image for yourselves. And there's a lot of brains and planning

A blonde Cassandra Peterson (a.k.a. Elvira) in her cameo as a country western bar's heavy bouncer





Linda Fiorentino as Susan Gittes, the reigning B-movie Scream Queen. *Brinke Stevens* dubbed-in Fiorentino's screams

that goes into it. You use your talents toward creating a niche and fulfilling it.

"And that's exactly how I saw our Susan character, and the direction I wanted to take her. Although she's making bad movies, she's very smart and trying to accomplish the best she can as a B-movie actress.

"Besidea," grins Irvin, "I come from the old school, and I was a Scream Queen fan from way back...even though they hadn't coined that phrase yet. I idolized Barbara Steele, Ingrid Pitt, and all the AIP and Hammer actresses."

Actress Linda Fiorentino was ultimately cast as Susan Gittes, "Hollywood's reigning horror movie Scream Queen." Pointedly, I asked Irvin if he'd ever considered hiring a real Scream Queen (like myself, frantically) for that juicy role. "In my wildest fantasies," he reassures me, "I'd certainly had those thoughts. But it was totally out of my hands in terms of the executive producers, the money people, and what was needed for the world market. Personally, I even wondered if Linda, herself, was well known enough to suit them. They accepted her as a sellable name and she gave us a magnificent performance."

Nevertheless, I was flattered when Irvin asked me to do a guest cameo, while he was shooting last December in L.A. I played a port-

cocktail waitress who briefly chats, in one scene, with the three stars. Irvin felt my fans would appreciate the irony of seeing me and Fiorentino together, a real "Scream Queen" facing a cinematic one. Similarly, he recruited cult fave Mary McCormack (EATING RAOUL) for a cameo as a snooty receptionist. "These are small parts," Irvin admits, "but every speaking role in the film was a special guest cameo."

Indeed, the supporting cast is a hazy mix of familiar names; Isaac Hayes as a detective, Paul Bartel as a horror movie director, Zelda Rubinstein as a nosy hotel guest, British rocker Adam Ant as Susan's agent-boy friend, HAPPY DAYS' Don Most as a "mysterious golfer," and Bo Derek's hunky TAJKEAN, Miles O'Keefe, as a B-movie actor. The most inventive "guest cameo" was

"You [B-Queens] are like Madonna...you have a definite commercial image you've created for yourselves."

performed by Cassandra Peterson. Donning a blonde Dolly Parton-type wig, she played a tough bouncer at a country western bar.

Peterson had mixed feelings about her strange transformation. "It was almost frightening to see myself not looking like Elvira," she told me candidly. "I no longer go out of my way to get parts as myself because I've come to like my anonymity in public." Irvin threw in homages to Peterson's famous alter ego, including a visible Elvira pinball machine and a glimpse of her *Femme Fatales* pictorial. "We mocked up a dummy cover on a real copy of *Femme Fatales* magazine," explained Irvin. "Don Most had it folded over to show an interior photo of Elvira. When he lays it down, you can see a hand cover photo of Linda Fiorentino in black leather, holding a bloody severed head."

Irvin delighted in scattering other "horror" props throughout the movie. In an opening scene, the camera lingers on Edward Munch's well-known painting, "The Scream." We later see an inflatable doll, its face bearing more than a passing resemblance to Munch's howling figure, in Susan's dressing

room. "I found out," noted Irvin, "that the subject in that painting is actually a woman. I never knew that. She looks like Sinead O'Connor! She's probably the original Scream Queen of all time!"

But any similarity to us real Scream Queens is dispelled early in the movie. Linda Fiorentino masterfully plays Susan Gittes as a hard-drinking, chain-smoking, "party-in-my-room!" kind of gal. She's tough and ballsy, and not above spitting on her cheating boyfriend or hashing her producer's head with a frying pan! She's a unique heroine whose wild streak contributes to her appeal.

Florentino's hrasny Susan almost overshadows Cathy, the demure saleswoman, beautifully played by Nancy Allen. But the development of Allen's character—from mousey housewife to sex goddess—is a joy to behold. "I'm very interested in characters who change," Allen told me, "and people who have something else going on behind their facade. I saw Cathy as a very repressed 'good girl,' who'd essentially lived for her parents and her husband, never for herself. Susan is the antithesis of Cathy, and she unleashes something inside of her, which I don't think she even knew existed. It's scary, but also exciting for her."

"I've known Nancy Allen for a long time, since 1978," said Irvin. "Luckily, through my friendship with her, she considered taking on this role." Irvin first met Allen when he was associate producer and production manager of HOME MOVIES; Brian DePalma served as

continued on page 66

Brinke Stevens, in a guest cameo as a waitress, serves Nancy Allen, C. Thomas Howell and Linda Fiorentino.



STEAMY
CHILLERS

&

EROTIC
THRILLERSIT'S **BECKY!**BECKY LEBEAU USUALLY FACES HER PREDATORS—
INCLUDING VAMPIRES AND DINOSAURS—IN THE FLESH.

BY GARY GARFINKEL

On-screen, she's sugar and spice. Hold the sugar: Becky LeBeau is more often cast as a presence rather than a player. Traditionally, she's the literal embodiment of male adolescent fantasy, which is aptly self-described in the hyphenated names of her characters: "Bubbles-The Hot Tub Girl" (BACK TO SCHOOL), "Strip-O-Gram Girl" (1988's NOT OF THIS EARTH), et al. Her role requirements: wear next-to-nothing (or nothing), jiggle her awesomely proportioned bosom, and smile. LeBeau's screen time is limited, but she delivers. Little wonder her screen persona is compatible with the kinetic "peepebow" medium of music video (specifically, David Lee Roth's CALIFORNIA GIRLS; she appeared as "Girl-Squeezing-Suntan Lemon Bottle").

"I don't mind being hired for the way I look," insists LeBeau. "My beauty and physique have been the focal point of my career. Last week, I did BODY CHEMISTRY III, an erotic thriller. Andrew Stevens, the executive producer and leading man, wanted me to look frumpy. They took one look at me as frumpy and Jim Wynorski, the director, said it didn't work. Then they wanted me sexy."

LeBeau launched her career as a winner of a centerfold contest. Though she has not been photographed as a Playboy centerspread, LeBeau did appear in several of the magazine's layouts. While a junior at the University of Southern Califor-

nia, she posed for "Playboy's Girls of the PAC 10," and found time to "party quite a bit" at Hugh Hefner's mansion.

A few beauty contests later, LeBeau hired an agent and landed a role in JOYSTICKS (1983), one of the

precursors of the "borny teen" trend. Her scene: a hot dog drops into LeBeau's shirt. The teen who lost the sausage, and his buddies, figure out a way to retrieve the warmer N'yuk, n'yuk.

The following year, LeBeau garnered a small part in Chuck Vincent's HOLLYWOOD HOT TUBS. Required to bounce around a locker room, she performed the difficult stunt of flipping a beefy guy over her shoulder. "Five years later," LeBeau smiled, "that beefy guy edited my first video, and he's been my editor ever since."

In TAKING IT OFF, she graduated to a leading role.

Co-starring with Russ Meyer veteran Kitmi Natividad, LeBeau played the owner of a dance studio for strippers. She worked a few days on SCHOOL SPIRIT, a precursor to the "borny invisible teen" trend, which was shot on the UCLA campus. The film starred Larry Linville who retired, too prematurely, from the M*A*S*H TV series. "He's great at playing the snotty jerks who everyone loves to hate," grinned LeBeau.

Then came BACK TO SCHOOL, the A-movie, the summer boxoffice smash of 1986. LeBeau was cast as Rodney Dangerfield's hot tub honey. Though her screen time was no more than a minute, the comedian introduced her to mainstream audiences.

Him: "So, what's your favorite subject?"

Her: "Poetry."

Him: "Well, maybe you can help me straighten out my Longfellow."

When addressed with an inquiry about Dangerfield, the actress hardly gushes. "I'll just say this: he did a lot of ad-libbing, which made the movie better."

Then it was back to the B's with THE UNDERACHIEVERS (1987). "A bad movie," huffed LeBeau, who played a water ballet in-

"I had a great time with NOT OF THIS EARTH, because I like the sexy, bimbo-type of thing. I have a good sense of humor."





"I've done the 'sex goddess' role in everything, and I don't care about hypocrisy."



"In BODY CHEMISTRY II, [above with director Jim Wynorski], I was supposed to be topless, but I wound up doing a full nude scene."

structor. "A typical scene had me lying naked on a rubber alligator in the middle of a pool, while the male lead tried to jump on my back and save me." One consolation; it was better than *MALIBU BEACH GIRLS*, which LeBeau described as her worst movie. "Someone on the crew happened to know Frankie Avalon," she recounted, "and they convinced him that we were doing a student film. Frankie agreed to help out by lip syncing 'Earth Angel' in a tiny part. Next thing you know, the one-sheet is out with 'MALIBU BEACH GIRLS, starring Frankie Avalon.' He threatened to sue and, eventually, they took his name off and cut his part from the film."

A chance encounter with Jim Wynorski prompted LeBeau's casting in *NOT*

OF THIS EARTH, the film that ignited her long-term professional relationship with the director. "Of all the people I've worked with in Hollywood, Jim's the best," said LeBeau. "He's a real pro, whose ability and creativity shows up in his work."

The science fiction thriller also provided its star, Traci Lords, with the opportunity to shed her "porn princess" image. "Jim didn't tell anyone who would be playing the female lead," explained LeBeau, "because he thought they would back out of the film. When I first got to the set, and found out that it was a Traci Lords movie, I got a knot in my stomach. I thought, 'Oh no, don't tell me this is a porno film.' But Jim and Roger Corman took a huge chance with Traci, hoping she could

act. Every tabloid paper and news show sent crews to the set. All the free publicity guaranteed a big hit. And Traci was great, she can really act."

LeBeau's 1990 output included *NINJA ACADEMY* (she played a nudist in a volleyball tournament) and a role in Wynorski's *TRAN-SYLVANIA TWIST*. Last year, she reunited with Wynorski for *SENS OF DESIRE*, an erotic thriller starring Tanya Roberts and Delta Sheppard. LeBeau was cast as a physical therapist. "The guy they used as my patient was the transportation foreman for the film," said LeBeau. "All he did was he around in a towel, while another actress and I stripped in front of him all day long." She also composed four songs for the movie, including the title

track.

Her B-Queen status recently qualified LeBeau as a popular guest on TV's talk and tabloid circuits. "THE JOAN RIVERS SHOW was fun because Joan was a great host. Unfortunately, I had to wear a bikini for the whole show and it got to be uncomfortable. Then I did a *HARD COPY*. I also got a chance to sing on *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT*," she said.

LeBeau proved to be a natural scene-stealer in Arsenio Hall's *QWWW* and Billy Crystal's *MAH-VA-LOUS* videos. "Arsenio had a clip of President Clinton looking through binoculars. His editors cut it together with some footage of me, in short-shorts, bending over to pick up a beach ball."

Then there were the David Lee Roth videos,

"Nudity...no problem. Once the camera is on, I am totally uninhibited. I guess you could say I'm something of an exhibitionist."

CALIFORNIA GIRLS and **JUST A GIGILO** "We were shooting **CALIFORNIA GIRLS** at the beach, and I pulled up to the set. Out of nowhere, two cops pulled me out of my car, handcuffed me and took me down to the station. In front of the whole video crew! It turned out there was a warrant out for my arrest because of an unpaid traffic ticket. I somehow managed to get bail money together and got back to the set, just as they were about to start. I kind of became a folk hero on that shoot."

As a successful entrepreneur, LeBeau has produced a series of **SOFT BODIES** videos. The premise of each video obligates LeBeau, who also serves as the hostess, and guest starlets to show more than a negligence for clothes ("...a titillating tennis match, a stimulating strip-down photo session"). "I had been in a lot of financially successful films for other people," nodded LeBeau. "About five years ago, I decided to start my own company so that if I made another hit video, I could get a bigger piece of the pie."

A promotional blurb describes a soft body as "part female, part angel and no plastic." "I don't think that fake breasts and behinds are pretty," LeBeau declared. "I believe men are much more attracted to the real thing, which is why all the women in my videos have to be natural, just like me."

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"I was busy, so I only had time for **DINOSAUR ISLAND**'s opening scene...I play the sacrificial virgin."



Right: Trono advises Lisa Star's "good sportsmanship, wonderful athletic ability...and she doesn't need a hair stylist." Below: Traci Mann in TOXIC AVENGER III.



NUKES, NYMPHETS, TOXIC TEASERS AND MANIAC NURSES:

THE SAGA OF A WOMAN IN SEARCH OF TROMA'S FEMALE DIRECTORS—AND A COMPANY T-SHIRT

BY DEBBIE ROCHON

"My goal in life is not to get an Academy Award."

Lisa Gaye, Troma Star

The Academy Awards Ceremony, 1993: Marisa Tomei, the dark horse contender for Best Supporting Actress, nabs the Oscar for MY COUSIN VINNY. Delivering her list of thank youts, she made one grievous omission; did suddenly becoming a hug shot prompt Tomei to ignore Troma? Did it slip her mind that, only eight years ago, the company hired her for THE TOXIC AVENGER? (It may have just been extra work but—hey—it was a meal, a subway token and a credit).

Then again, perhaps the Sultans of Schlock would like to forget they densed work to another former starlet. When an unknown Madonna was desperately seeking a film role, she auditioned for Troma's 1983 T&A epic, THE FIRST TURN-ON! However, Heidi Bassett bagged the part, joining a cast that included "Tammy the Wonder Tarantula." Judging the Material Girl's recent film reviews, maybe Troma knew exactly what it was doing.

An abridged history of Troma, Inc.

NYMPHOMD BARBARIAN IN DINOSAUR HELL, RABID GRANNIES, CHOPPER CHICKS IN ZOMBIE TOWN, GIRL SCHOOL SCREAMERS, THEY CALL ME MACHO WOMAN, FERTILIZE THE BLASPHEMING BOMBSHELL,

etc., etc.

Paramount spent millions on a p.r. campaign that translated something called SLIVER into an erotic thriller. All expenses would have been spared had the Sharon Stone saga been a Troma release; it's likely those Crazy Eddies of the B-Cinema would have called it SLFAZOID SLUT SODOMIZES SELF IN SKYSCRAPER. But Troma's promotional hyperbole camouflages shoe-string budgets. In Cannes, distributors outbid each other for the blockbusters, but pick up a Troma film with loose change.

Me, I'm a writer and Chekhov-trained actress who admits a perverse fondness for Troma movies. The only thing I like more than a Troma movie is a Troma T-shirt. Unfortunately, I don't own a Troma T-shirt. Not that I haven't tried to



Lisa Star and Toxic at Cannes. Though the couple was rumored to be intimate, Star insists, "We were only exchanging recipes."

get one, only yesterday, I went right to the source...

TROMAVILLE

In the midtown of Manhattan, on the far west side, there's a place called Hell's Kitchen. Prostitutes, drug dealers and homeless mill about. If you make it to 733 Ninth Avenue, you'll see the "Troma Inc." sign suspended from a fourth floor tenement.

I was buzzed in by the receptionist. "Can I help you?" she inquired. "I want a Troma T-shirt," answered yours truly. A sudden clap of thunder drowned out the

receptionist's reply. Next thing I knew, she was on the horn summoning Troma co-founder, Lloyd Kaufman. I had a feeling, upon meeting Mr. Kaufman, that getting a free T-shirt wouldn't be too easy. "Maybe," I said to myself, "I should try to break the ice."

Mr. Kaufman, is it true that, as a guest on Morton Downey's show, you were physically thrown off the set?

It was presented to us as a Halloween party. It was during the first week of his show, so no one knew much about him. I was to present a

clip from TROMA'S WAR, which we had just finished shooting. We were to discuss the making of special effects, to be followed by a costume party with the audience. In reality, they pre-planned a situation in which I was to be humiliated and physically removed from the show—for ratings.

Once you realized it was all a deception, couldn't you have just walked off?

No! They had whipped the crowd up, prior to taping the show, so that they were in a frenzy. They were dressed up quite violently. One guy had a sword n' penis mask on, and there I was in my little bowtie and suit. My wife had just got out of the hospital, after giving birth, and this was our first night out. She was sitting in the audience with these animals. I was afraid that I would be attacked, so I stayed on the stage.

I understand you made a less-than-graceful exit...

The security guards came and removed me by physically pulling me off the stage—and fisticuffs ensued! After that episode,

Lisa Cornin as the NYMPHOMAD SABBANIAN in DINOSAUR HELL (1991), which debuted the "Tromasaurus."



"To have me, the head of Troma, be physically beaten on the air—live!—You can just bet the ratings were huge."



Lisa Star, shove in HIKE 'EM HIGH 3, was also in FORTRESS.

Downey was no longer broadcast live; his show was put on delay.

What was Downey's purpose for humiliating you?

He would just try and humiliate guests, any way he could, to get his ratings up. Finally, only publicity-starved people would go on his show. To have me, the head of Troma, physically beaten on the air—live!—you can bet the ratings were huge! Ever since then, I've turned down many shows, including Geraldo.

Has your company ever been protested by women's groups or feminists?

No. If you look at our films, you'll see there's nothing to complain about.

There is a stigma attached to Troma films, though.

There are bigger fish to fry than Troma. I'm shocked the women's groups don't go after films like PRETTY WOMAN. My children saw it on a plane, and I can't believe that their introduction to prostitution was glamorized. Women in our films may be in bikinis, and have good bodies, but that doesn't mean anything.

Any female directors and writers on the Troma staff?

We've never not considered it. We've had plenty of female writers, but we have not had—I have to say—we have not had female directors. On the writing side, there certainly has been a lot of women. All of the TOXIC AVENGER movies were co-written with women. I know, as a company, we have not hired any female directors. We have over 100 movies in our library, so I imagine there's got to be one or two directed by [women]. But we had nothing to do with hiring them.

Are women involved with Troma's decision-making level?

Oh, yeah! They are very much involved. If you look at our movie posters, you'll see lots of women's names on them.

(Kaufman organizes an impromptu scavenger hunt. We examine the movie posters adorning his office walls in search of a female credited as director. Our investigation expands to adjoining quarters throughout the building,

all decorated with posters. The search proves futile. "The scripts we have produced," admits Kaufman, "tend to have men attached to them." But he abruptly shifts into the victory mode.)

Look at this film poster. It says produced by Susan Kaufman!

No relation to you, huh? Yes, yes! It's my sister. There are a few films here that have been art directed by women.

I saw the name Charles Kaufman on a poster.

That's my brother. All in the family...

Well, they are talented. The reason Michael Herz and I created Troma is to give us the right to direct a movie or two. We clean the bathrooms, so I think we have the right to direct the films—

(Kaufman draws closer to a nearby wall. His eyes lock on the posters.)

—I still believe that there is a film here, somewhere, that was directed by a woman.

I'm sure you're familiar with the current crop of B-Queens. As a matter of fact, Brinke Stevens starred in one of your pick-ups, THE HAUNTING FEAR. Why haven't you hired these cult celebrities for your in-house productions?

Actors come to us. Besides, a lot of the B-Queens are on the West Coast. In New York, we've created our own movie stars.

Lake Phoebe Legere?

Not to mention Toxie, Tromise the Nuclear Squirrel, Sgt. Kabukiman and Nazzone.

Yeah, anybody who fits into the costumes can play them!

(Reaching into a pile of papers strewn across his desk, Kaufman pulls out the latest edition of "Troma Times.")

Look, here's a picture of Francis Ford Coppola with Toxie!

People really love him, huh?

Who? Coppola?

No, Toxie!

Oh, yeah... yeah (pauses as he while taps a pen on his



Peethouse model Kaechi in *FORTRESS OF AMERICA*. The film was directed by Eric Louzil, who also helmed *NURSE 911* and *E...*

desk? I faintly recall some woman director here somewhere.

In retrospect, is there any film—which you produced or picked-up—that you would prefer to forget?

Yeah, *BLOODSUCKING FREAKS*.

I rented it but shut it off. It made me nauseous.

But in *MANIAC NURSES: BLOODSUCKING FREAKS II*, the women have their revenge.

Thank God. What's the wildest stunt an actress has pulled to nab a role?

Madonna kept approaching Michael Herz for a role in *THE FIRST TURN-ON*! She even made her own little camper costume, which she wore when she came here. She was extremely resolute about getting a part, and made it perfectly clear what she was willing to do. She begged to be in the film, but we turned her down.

Do you still have Madon-

na's screen test?

Knowing Tromb, we've reused the tape many times since then.

You're still using the same 10-year-old tape?

We're probably still using the same camera.

Have you ever had to fire an actress and recast the role?

No, we've never done that. But when we have three or four major roles, and a particular actress is being cooperative, her role gets enhanced. If there are any extra lines added, she'll get it. If there is an actress with a bad attitude, we may eliminate or cut down her scenes. But we've never fired anyone.

Did an actress ever try to "sexually compromise" herself during the auditioning process?

The first phase of auditions are done on video tape. Michael and I aren't there. They say their name and number, and have one minute

to do anything they want.

Maybe you should rent out the auditioning tapes.

Most of it is horrible, horrible stuff—awful! Most of them are without any talent, charisma and energy. It's horrible! It brings me down watching it, it saps my energy like a sponge. But, every so often, there's a great one.

Have you appeared in

any of your own films, a la *Hatchcock*?

No, but I've ruined other people's movies. I'm in *ROCKY* and *ROCKY V*, *THE FINAL COUNTDOWN*, *CRY UNCLE*. I starred in my first movie, *BATTLE OF LOVE'S RETURN* (1971).

You didn't hire an actor?

Well, I was the only one that I knew would show up every day—and not get paid.

Francis Ford Coppola (left) and Toshi (right) swap stories.



Many independent companies are going through a dry period. But you claim that 86% of your films make a profit...

Not all of our movies have broken even yet but, in time, they will. We keep our budgets low so we can gamble on subjects like *VEGAS IN SPACE*, which is the first musical comedy with a transvestite cast. Hopefully, people will see the Troma logo and trust this will be fun. They'll see that transvestitism is a perfectly jolly state of being.

Does Troma tailor their films for a straight-to-video release?

Our films are meant for movie theatres. We detail the background for big screens.

Which comes first: the movie or the movie's title?

The title comes after. *SURF NAZIS MUST DIE* was shot under the title *SURF NAZIS*. We decided it should be changed, so no one would think *SURF NAZIS MUST LIVE*.

Do you shoot extra, more explicit footage for the European release of your movies?

We have a director's cut that's very explicit. We also do a TV version of everything. We shoot alternate dialogue for American television. If there's a nude scene, we'll substitute a mild version. The same with violence. If there's a scene where someone gets their arm chopped off and blood squirts out all over the place—which is what we'd prefer to see—we'll replace it with something else. We sometimes replace shots with scenes that change the mood of the action.

You've mentioned there's a bigger talent pool in Los Angeles. Is it easier to cast your films there?

It's definitely easier. The last two movies we made in L.A., we were flooded with offers. We could've had the talent for free. The reason we left New York in the first place is because the mayor and the commissioner are not cooperative to filming in New York. We've been mak-

"Madonna was extremely resolute about getting a part. She begged to be in THE FIRST TURN-ON!, but we turned her down."



Playboy centerfold Susan Scott in Troma's *STUDENT CONFIDENTIAL*.

ing films for 20 years, putting all our money into the economy here. If this city had 100 Tromas, it would be getting billions of dollars. Instead, Paramount comes in for two or three days, and all the bureaucrats run out to lick their feet. They come in and use this city as a garbage dump, and then take all their money back to L.A. They don't do any post-production or lab work here. We try to

shoot a film here, and they send us up to Harlem.

Do you think this rejection is caused by the type of films you make?

I think the politicians want jobs and the opportunity to be around movie icons. The media praises films that cost 100 million which, to me, is disgusting. We took \$6 million out of this city by shooting in L.A. If they hadn't been so rude to us, we wouldn't have

done that. I swam against the tide by staying in New York to pursue movie making, only to have New York be hostile and interfere with me!

What is Troma's next in-house production?

TROMIO AND JULIET, a Shakespeare film. Toxie, Troma the Nuclear Squirrel and Sgt. Kabukiman would all have featured roles.

The fourth Toxie Avenger film will be *TOXIE GOES TO WASHINGTON*. He gets elected to Congress and his wife gets pregnant and has to deal with the issue of abortion.

He's got a very busy life! I don't know whether Trome the Nuclear Squirrel would enter this movie, though. We'd have to see when we get there. There's so many variables!

Any collaborations yet with your Japanese investors?

We had a Western with a Japanese male star in the lead, but the film company changed their minds about financing it. It would be hard to find an American company to finance a Western with a Japanese comedian who doesn't speak English. American companies don't want to take a chance. New Line was supposed to finance *THE TOXIC CRUSADERS* movie last summer, but they also backed out. We're suing New Line because they reneged on their contract.

I assume your decision to become an independent company was governed by the need for "artistic" autonomy.

We wanted a place where new talent could find a home—to have a studio where the word "independent" remains intact. We are proud of the fact that a lot of films would not be made if we didn't get involved. We'll even release a film unrated, if the filmmakers want to go that way. I'm sure the ratings board will find something to cut out of *VEGAS IN SPACE*—I don't think they're ready for transvestitism.

Now about that T-shirt... □



LADY DEATH

YOUR FAVORITE FEMME FATALE CHATS WITH THE COMIC WORLD'S MOST VOLUPTUOUS BELLE.

BY BRINKE STEVENS

December, 1991: A comic book called *Evil Ernie* grabs the complacent market by its collar and screams "Anarchy!" in its face. The title character, a wild, undead, teenage psychotic, was abused by his family and misshapen by medical science. The mission of Ernie Fairchild, aka Evil Ernie, totally annihilate the human race. And he's spurred on by a mysterious femme fatale known only as Lady Death.

The comic's creator, Brian Pulido, had perpetrated this assault on fandom as a result of his previous inability to sell "Evil Ernie" as a movie script. A graduate of NYU Film School, Pulido had done everything from fetching coffee to assistant directing on numerous features, commercials, and music videos. When nobody offered him a realistic deal on his screenplay, Pulido opted for an alternate concept: transform it into a comic book. Only two years after Evil Ernie's "birth," an event which rocked newstand competition, the splatter-punk anthro is much closer to materializing as a movie.

"When I watched a lot of horror movies," recalled Pulido, "I just kept seeing these adult figures preying on kids. I immediately wanted to reverse the formula. I'm a speed-metal fan, and I thought the scariest thing you could imagine would be a speed-metal kid who was undead, coming back and



Comic legend George Perez's pencil rendering of The Lady (opposite page). Right: February pin-up from Lady Death's 1994 calendar.



Eric Macchi's rendering of Evil Ernie (top), Lady Death by Calverton artist Jim Valenti (right)



Yay! Steven Hughes' cover for a limited edition of Evil Ernie. Hughes captured Ernie's unbridled intensity.



seeking revenge on the living. And to get this kid motivated, there'd have to be a wonderful temptress. So from the very beginning, the idea of Lady Death was there...The same as Napoleon had Josephine, Samson had Delilah, Anthony had Cleopatra."

Set in 1993, the Evil Ernie scenario surely seems to be a reflection of our difficult global era. "I do it more as 'venting' than anything else," confirmed Pulido. "I look at so many actual events that blow my mind, terrible real-life things that I can't explain. But the Ernie character is undead, so he doesn't have to worry about the failings of the human body, like cancer for instance, he just goes on forever."

Pulido admitted to early influences such as *Heavy Metal* magazine and more exotic European publications. And attending the weekend premiere of *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*—at the early age of seven—undoubtedly contributed to the genesis of his comic book character. In later years, Pulido gravitated toward heavy metal bands like Metallica for inspiration. Nurtured by the counter-culture, Evil Ernie was originally created to provoke shock from moviegoers, and Pulido firmly believed in the existence of a target audience.

"I've always had a darker sensibility," Pulido confessed. "One might ask, 'Is there a light at the end of the tunnel?' To be honest, I don't think so! I think maybe this is a fictional story where the bad guy wins. It is nihilistic, it's complete anarchy. At the end of our projected 60-issue series there is a final resolution of dark and light forces. But, for now, my main course of action is to descend even deeper into darkness."

So what does a seemingly normal public find appealing about a maverick comic book? "I think our readers simply like the combination of action, horror, and pure absurdity," mused Pulido. "Mostly, our fans seem to appreciate how the pace is quicker than in a standard comic book, so that it has the feeling of an actual motion picture. And it's clearly 'darker,' which has its own special appeal to many people. We were more influenced by pop culture

**"Do you ever have sex?"
Lady Death: "Maybe once every
hundred years...and I guarantee
you, nobody's ever
lived through it."**



The September pin-up from Lady Death's 1994 calendar: "This shirt," Pulido, "is called SLOOD BEADS. When fully colored, the ocean will run red." (top) Is the original 1990 concept of the Lady

and real life rather than by other comic books. So, it's not necessarily a reflection of what's going on in the current comic book realm...it's something very different."

After his five-issue contract with Malibu Comics had expired, Pulido launched his own company called Chana Comics. "We named it so, because chaos refers to the time before creation...and that's sort of where our thought processes lie. We consider ourselves to be the Harley-Davidson of the comics. This is not a 'pretty boy' comic book company, and we're into sort of mean and brutal stuff. Nothing that's too crazy, but gritty material that reflects our tough times." Now at the helm of his own enterprise, Pulido is gearing up to publish further installments of the "Evil Ernie" saga. Of course, Lady Death won't be denied an upcoming miniseries of her own.

The alluring artistry of Pulido's partner, Steven Hughes, has helped cement their loyal fan following. "Clearly, Lady Death is very attractive

to a lot of guys!" laughed Pulido. "We get our fair share of fan letters, which address our characters in the first person." One little known fact: Lady Death is primarily based upon Pulido's own beautiful, blonde wife, Francisca.

"When I'm sitting down and writing about Lady Death, I imagine she's very regal," Pulido explained. "She's fully in control. And beyond a shadow of a doubt, she has an agenda which is unclear to everybody. I think that's what kept our readers coming back after the first series, the fact that no one really knew what her hidden agenda might be. I always hear she is perceived as very regal by our readers...and yet she is actually the true evil in that comic book."

IN THE LADY'S LAIR

Following my pleasant chat with Brian and Francisca Pulido at their North Hollywood home, I took a deep breath and bravely asked to meet Lady Death, herself. She was surprisingly very obliging, even for a carelessly busy femme fatale. Here follows

the Lady's first-ever printed interview (as channeled by Mr. Pulido).

Where do you shop for all of your outrageously sexy clothes?

They're specially designed for me by de Sade of Hades.

What's your favorite food or drink?

I only drink blood. And my favorite strains are the blood of innocents.

What's your background and history?

I lived a life of death, and, once dead, I led a campaign of tyranny and mayhem through Limbo and Hell...and I became its goddess, its queen.

So, you were once a living person?

I prefer not to admit it, but once, during a time of the Black Plague, I was a young girl with hope.

Why do you hate the living so much?

I cannot stand the sound of their breathing. And, of course, I derive sexual ecstasy from their death throes.

Do you know the Grim Reaper personally?

Know him? I killed him.

What are your long range goals?

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Ava Cadell posed with her friend and photographer, the late Mark Lelwicz, for a Christmas card.

LADY DEATH

continued from page 10

Megadeth!
Will you ever appear here on Earth?

Yes, when all the breathing stops. And, by the way, you won't want to be here.

Since *Evil Ernie* is such a rebellious young man, how do you control him?

If he doesn't do as I say, he doesn't get what he wants...and I am what he wants, naturally.

What's your relationship like your creators, Brian Paludo and Steven Hughes?

Well, for now they do serve my purpose. But they may, one day, outlive their usefulness.

Will you soon be seen as a model kit?

Model kit? I'm coming out as a statue, so I can be worshipped properly.

What do you do for fun?

I like to take blood bubble baths, and get a moon tan on Blood Beach. That sort of thing, y'know. Girl stuff. And, oh, let's see, seduce and kill on a grand scale.

What is the usefulness of death?

I am the final resting place, the dark embrace I am, what you all head towards...I am Death.

Do you ever have sex?

Maybe once every hundred years, whenever it suits my purpose. And I guarantee you, nobody ever lived through it.

Has anyone ever called you a blonde bimbo with big hooters?

No one that's survived...

Will we be seeing more of you in upcoming projects?

More than you'd ever want to see, darling. I'll be appearing in an upcoming calendar,

pencil and inked by Steven Hughes. Towards the end of the year, you'll finally learn my whole story in *THE CRUSADE*, a new miniseries by Paludo and Hughes. Hah, my worthless little vessels that they are!

Do you have any final message for our readers?

I look forward to the death of all of you! □

ACTING ON IMPULSE

continued from page 10

director, and Allen played an ex-prostitute. "I think *ACTING ON IMPULSE* offers one of Nancy's best performances," concluded Irvin. "The Cathy character is a very sweet girl. Nancy hasn't been given the opportunity to play that side of herself very often...and that's really who Nancy is."

When I passed on Irvin's comments to Nancy, she laughed and said, "I'm drawn to roles that are less like me, to fascinating characters where I can vicariously live through those roles. I explore strange things, without having to do it in real life—like being a prostitute, a cop, a tough hutch I'm drawn to what I haven't experienced physically yet."

"But emotionally," she continued, "you need some experience to bring truth to a role I've always been shy, it's something I've worked my whole life to overcome. To get a feel for Cathy, I went back into my shell and remembered what it was like, and how it felt to finally come out of my shell."

Allen credits her longtime collaborator, and ex-husband, Brian DePalma with dissipating much of her timidity; "He was the first really strong influence on me as an actress. Sometimes I'll still hear his inner voice in terms of trying a riskier choice with a character."

When I asked Allen to comment on horror movies, she had certain reservations about the genre; "So much of it has been run into the ground I find myself more protective of women and women's roles."

And what about the Scream Queen cult phenomenon? "It was fascinating," she smiled, "to find out this world of filmmaking existed, and there's a mass following for it!"

Indeed it is, and we do ultimately serve a very useful purpose. If you have sharp

ears, you'll notice it's my own patented screams coming out of Linda Fiorentino's mouth in *ACTING ON IMPULSE*! □

AVA CADELL

continued from page 10

although I don't like gratuitous nudity. I'm flattered when anybody wants to see my body in a movie because it's a compliment, there's no doubt about it. But, I also like to show people that I can act, and sometimes it's difficult for people to look beyond your body I did a play in San Diego called *Hooters*, and I worked very hard on it. Since one of the female reviewers couldn't say anything derogatory about my performance, she remarked about my body. It hurt my feelings, but you get used to it."

Still, Cadell has been able to find ways to keep up her acting chops. "You can't keep your tools sharpened if you don't use them. In *DIVORCE COURT*, I played a transsexual. I like doing things that are not me. The last movie I did was *THE LAST PARSON*, with George Hamilton, Kathy Ireland and Elliot Gould. I played the bitchy wife of a movie mogul, and I got to scream at Jack Scalia."

Written, produced and directed by Lorenzo DeSantis, *THE LAST PARSON* is scheduled for release later this year. "That movie had a lot of production problems, too. Kathy Ireland did not have that role initially—Lori Singer did, and Jack Scalia got the part that was originally Steven Bauer's."

Cadell devotes much of her free time to working with children's charities. "I work with the MacLaren Children's Center for abused children. I also work with handicapped children for a wonderful charity called *Ahead With Horsem*."

Cadell's personal life has been busy since she married in December of 1991. "I married a famous criminal attorney who said he'd never get married." Cadell also fended off boredom by penning a book, *Men Are Dogs*, which will be published next year. Acting, however, is still her principal interest.

"I love working, even if it's not a good script, because the next one might be better. I always say I'd rather do a bad movie than no movie, because even when I do a bad movie I always meet somebody and

something good comes out of it." □

BECKY LEREAU

continued from page 10

Since the successful debut of her first video, LeBeau has produced an additional four installment. She also financed merchandising tie-ins, including photo sets of herself and her *SOFT BODIES* costars. "Starting and operating my own company has been the most satisfying work in my career. But it's not easy. First, I have to come up with the basis for a video, then I have to find the girls and the locations. I also direct and produce the actual shoot, then I have to sell it."

What about the feminist reaction to LeBeau's habitual dismemberments and link to "bimbo" characters? "I don't have a problem doing nudity for the same reason it doesn't bother me to be typecast as the dumb blonde," said LeBeau. "I don't take it seriously, I'm secure about myself as a person. If other people find what I do offensive, it's their problem. Once the camera is on, I'm totally uninhibited. I guess you could say I'm something of an exhibitionist."

But LeBeau admits her sometimes misguided past has been abused and/or exploited. "There were some photographs published which upset me, to the point where I don't like to talk about it," said LeBeau. "I'll just say that people have not always treated me in the same way that I treat my models in the *SOFT BODIES* videos, which is to say that I've been mistreated more than one occasion."

Of course, B-movies are still in the picture. LeBeau's next film is *DINOSAUR ISLAND*, a likely precursor to the "horny, cave-dwelling teen" trend. Unlike its commercial inspiration, *JURASSIC PARK*, there may be more mammaries on view than mastodons. "It has something to do with a prehistoric environment," explained LeBeau, "where a bunch of dinosaurs ate all but one or two of the men. Of course, the women fight over the remaining men." □

GINGER LYNN ALLEN

continued from page 10

Though Allen has validated her acting talent, there are the occasional grim reminders of her past. Like the recent

CURRENT AFFAIR telecast which revealed "the expert queen's" arrest for tax evasion. "I'm still dealing with the court system," explained Allen. "And I have to be very careful about what I say. I will, however, say that I was the sacrificial lamb for the entire adult film industry. It's the politics of my past and, in reality, had nothing to do with taxes. We have a very unfair, unjust court system."

During this difficult period, Allen lost her house and had to start over. BOUND AND GAGGED could be a new beginning, the chance to wipe out the stereotype. "I guess I was viewed, and still am, as a sex symbol," said Allen. "But somewhere along the way I lost my identity as a woman, as a person with a brain and feelings. But it's over and done with. Let's move on." □

SARAH DOUGLAS

continued from page 15

"Fuck off," and people go, 'What did you say?' If you say it with a certain amount of dignity, you can actually get away with murder, and I've basically got away with murder for years, although I might get my comeuppance one day." □

RHONDA SHEAR

continued from page 14

that made her irresistible to men and women alike. Marilyn epitomizes the kind of femme fatale I find most intriguing, and the one I would especially prefer to emulate.

Jayne Mansfield, another blonde sex symbol of the '50s, is often compared to Monroe and had the sweet, innocent personality indigenous to her famous look-alike. But her 40-18-36 physique proved intimidating to filmmakers and critics, with one reviewer noting Jayne's "overblown figure and squawling sounds. Her imitation of Monroe was preposterous." She was scheduled to play Countess Dracula, in BLOOD OF DRACULA'S CASTLE (1967), but a fatal accident abruptly terminated her career.

Now I come to two legendary femmes fatales, both great comedienne, whom I have idolized all my life. They are the embodiment of all I could ever hope to be.

The incomparable Mae West had the voluptuous body of a world class sex queen, but she parodied herself and all

other sex goddesses with a unique blend of saltiness and outrageousness. Her honesty and earthiness are qualities I so admire that they're incorporated into my own stand-up comedy.

Last, but not least, my super-lad, Lucille Ball. Lucy started out as a glamour girl in B-movies such as FOLLOWS THE FLEET. Despite her transition to a brilliant, slapstick comedienne, she had the body and good looks to perpetuate her glamorous image. A former fatale on the big screen, Lucy was more sweet than sultry as Mrs. Ricky Ricardo. She could be temperamental or hilarious, to me she was the best of both worlds.

These women have collectively rendered a portrait of the flawless femme fatale; specifically, one who merges an earthly reality with an exhilarating, ethereal, dreamlike quality. It is the intrigue that keeps us coming back for more, and makes us want to capture and hold onto little pieces of their magic. I only hope as a performer I can catch a little of that same stardust. □

CHILLER THEATRE

continued from page 82

in *Femme Fatales*

Jonathan "the Animal": "Convention, goodness!"

Klinton #1: "This is the third or fourth Chiller Theatre convention I've been to, and each one gets better."

Klinton #2: "It's been a great experience. I love it!" Klinton #3: "I was killed by three Klintons from another sector while on a recruiting mission."

Chiller Theatre, in fact, has proven so successful that TWO additional conventions are scheduled for '93. Kevin Clement, Chiller's P.T. Barnum of the B-Cinema and founder of the "Femme Fatales" convention, has organized the following events:

Chiller's first SPY-FI convention (August 14-15).

Chiller's Fall installment (October 29, 30, and 31), Meadowslands Hilton, 2 Harmon Plaza, Secaucus, NJ

Guests include Beverly Garland (B-Queen of the '50s), Manique Gabrielle (FF 12), Debra Lamb (FF 14), Debbie Rochon and Jeffrey Combs.

And, yes, MORE guests will be announced. □

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CHILLER THEATRE IV

AMERICA'S ONLY FEMME FATALES
FIESTA TURNS UP THE HEAT.

BY CARRIE ADLER

Friday evening, May 14th. The night before.

The guests of Chiller Theatre were milling around the hotel, shaking off jet lag. *Caroline Munro* [FF 1:2], even more gorgeous than when she chartered *THE GOLDEN VOYAGE OF SINBAD* (1973), dined quietly in the restaurant. A few tables away, a couple of ex-partners celebrated their reunion, *Herschell G. Lewis* and *David F. Friedman*, together after a 25-year separation, recounted the fruits of their past collaborations (*BLOOD FEAST*, 2000 *MANIACS*, et al.). A thirtysomething admirer greeted Lewis, proclaiming "I grew up with your movies. Meeting you is like meeting an old friend." "Really?" deadpanned Lewis. "I'm probably the oldest friend you ever had." *Vivian Schilling* (FF 1:3), who could pass for Nicole Kidman's twin sister, enjoyed a repast with some *Femme Fatales* staffers and reflected on *FUTURE SHOCK*'s post-production phase (Schilling served as star and screenwriter). Seated at a separate table, blonde beauty *Suzanne Slater* (FF 1-4) patiently answered questions about her latest release, *MIND TWISTER* (sample inquiry: "Is that nude woman on the movie poster, really you?"). A waiter addressed Slater with an even more direct question: "May I recommend some sex on the beach?" Huh? "That's the name of a drink," clarified the waiter.

The weekend, May 15-16th: *Chiller Theatre's Toy, Model & Film Expo*.

Crowds swarmed into Rothman



Caroline Munro flew from her native England to attend Chiller Theatre.

Center of Fairleigh Dickinson University (Hackensack, New Jersey). A radio p.r. blitz, and all-star guest roster, drew a record turnout. *Dona Sper* (FF 1-4), former *Playboy* centerfold-turned-action star, promoted her instructional video, *MODELING MADE EASY*. *Irish McCullo* generated even more charm and youthful vigor than her 1956 TV series, *SHEENA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE*. The B-

film community was further represented by a stellar list of spokespersons, including actor *Gunnar Hansen*, director *Frank Henenlotter*, producer *Sam Sherman*, *Troma* promoters *Lisa Goye* and *Traci Mann* and horror hosts *John Zacherle* and *Lou "The Creep" Steele*.

The Rev. *Rick Sullivan*, editor of *Gore Gazette* and *Chiller* emcee, exhibited a comic flair that NBC's "late night" losers should try to imitate. *Femme Fatales* editor *Bill George* introduced the actresses on the seminar panel, but *Debbie Rochon*—FF "editrix"—whipped the audience into shape with her "take no prisoners" q&a session ("Were you ever in a film you would like to forget?"... "Is the 'scream queen' label a professional liability?"... "I want answers, ANSWERS!").

Art was hardly neglected, courtesy of guests *Dave "Rocketeer" Stevens*, *Mike Noluna*, *Stephen R. Barrett*, *Dave Cockrum* and *Dark Horse Comics* sculptor *Randy Bowen*. Horror and science fiction scribes included *New York's Daily News* columnist *The Phantom of the Movies*, along with su-



Left to right: *Dona Sper*, *Suzanne Slater* and FF editrix *Debbie Rochon* greet editor *Bill George*.

thers *F. Paul Wilson*, *Stanley Winter*, *Douglas E. Winter*, and *Matthew Costello*. And then there were the video entrepreneurs, *Mike "Something Weird" Vraney*, who rescued a generation of nostalgic "adult entertainment" that had been presumed lost, and *Rhino Home Video* mogul *Johnny Legend*.

OK, enough with the name dropping. Here are some abridged reviews of *Chiller's* May '93 installment.

Vivian Schilling: "The customers are very aware of my previous film work. I was happy to see the film *TERROR EYES*, which I thought had fallen off the face of the earth. (Schilling appeared in the wraparound story of the 1988 anthology movie.) But I've seen it here at several different tables."

Dona Sper: "I signed a LOT of issues of *Playboy*, and a lot of movie posters and pictures that I'm surprised people even found."

Suzanne Slater: "It was my first convention, and I would love to be invited back! People brought in pictures that were shot God knows how long ago. I thought there would be competition among the actresses, but there there wasn't any of all!"

Rolf Kanevsky (director of *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE*): "Chiller is a huge convention. I love meeting all the people I've read about

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Femme Fatales

Feb. 1993

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